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OR, The Spoiler Despoiled.

A Romance of Magic City.

BY ARTHUR C. GRISSOM,
AUTHOR OF "LITTLE FOXFOOT," "THE SURE-SHOT PARDS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

"I KNOW you, Dan Fury! Get out o' that!" The speaker, a youth, was leaning, with head and arms visible, from a cabin loft, and in his right hand was the deadly six-shooter of the Colorado Mountains.

In the room below him was the dark figure of a man, who was dimly visible by the light of the struggling moonbeams that came in through the

"COME ON, DORA, I'M YER FIRIN' SQUAD!" AND TRUTHFUL AND THE FAVORITE HURRIED AWAY, THE NIGHT MADE LURID BY THE BURNING PARLOR.

half-open door. The intruder was standing at one side of the room beside a rough table, the one drawer of which he had just opened preparatory to examining its contents. He started and rested his hand on the handle of a weapon when the interruption came.

"Get out o' what?" he growled insolently.

"I'll show you what in a jiffy if you don't obey!" replied the youth, threateningly.

"Who is't a-talkin' so much with his mouth?" the man demanded.

"Oh, Moses! you know who it is—that 'bright boy' that afforded you and your leather-brained associates so much amusement the other evening; the one you were pleased to address as 'buddy'; just nobody but Bud Bright, as the name now goes, but—*Bud has the drop!* Never mind drawing that weapon, Dan. You know what 'the drop' means in Magic City!"

"What are ye callin' me 'Dan' fer—'Dan Fury'?" asked the visitor, innocently. "You've made a mistake. Thar's no fury about me."

The youth in the loft laughed.

"Come, now, you can't disguise your voice, Dan. Do you want me to prove you a liar?"

As he spoke the youth suddenly lowered a dark lantern with his left hand, springing back the slide, and as the effulgence covered the form of the midnight intruder, he gave an exclamation of triumph and satisfaction!

He had not been mistaken. It was Dan Fury. He was a tall, heavily-built man, dressed in the rough garb of a miner, and fully armed. His face was covered with a thick growth of hay-colored whiskers, and his eye—he had but one—was restless and piercing.

As the light fell full upon him, he uttered a snarl, for all disguise was useless now.

"You thought me out of town, eh, Fury, so you paid me a visit to-night?" queried the boy. "You see, I suspected as much. I took particular pains to let you see me as I rode away on the west trail, but I was equally careful not to let you see me come back. I wanted to find out who it is that is so interested in my business that I am spied on all the time.

"I thought the first night I was supposed to be away from home the place would be entered, and I put up this job to catch on. When you sneaked in the door while ago, Fury, you didn't see me, but I saw you, and I wasn't surprised. The sight of you only confirmed my belief that you're a Satan's lieutenant of the first rank. You see, the contents of that drawer are not very valuable, but I don't want them disturbed."

Fury, now that there could be no concealment either of his identity or purpose, coolly seated himself, and looked boldly up at his captor.

"What are you going to do about it?" he questioned.

"Nothing," was the ready reply; "except to warn you to make this your last visit here. Great guns! what kind of a town is this? Can't a man come here and attend to private business without being spied on and robbed? You claim to be one of the prominent men of the camp—are you a type of the place's morality?"

"Magic is not given over much ter religion," was the reply, as the rough's mouth parted in a grin. "Thar never wuz but one parson in ther burg, an' he lef at ther end ov a week by request. He fell in love with Denton's daughter, which was ag'in' ther rules. And so we fired him an' took his new meetin'-house fer a saloon."

"He ought to have resisted such treatment," Bud Bright retorted with spirit. "I heard of a sober parson once who shot eternal daylight through a gang of toughs that attempted to make him run. The fact is, Fury, it's but a step, in some cases, from meekness to madness. Some meek people are like a certain innocent-looking little box—tramp on it and it will blow you over into the next Territory."

"Yourself for instance!" jeered Fury.

"Never mind," returned the youth. "You may have cause to see for yourself ere long, if you don't give my affairs a rest. Ain't it about time you grew scarce? The quicker you chase yourself out of here the better I'll be pleased."

Fury, with his hands in his pockets, leisurely got up and sauntered toward the door.

"Hope you'll return my call, sometime, Willis," he called back.

The youth gave an inaudible exclamation of surprise as he heard the name *Willis*; but he gave no token of the feeling, as he replied:

"When I do I'll not sneak in at midnight. You'll be sure to know of my call, and you'll not forget it soon after I'm gone."

He continued to keep the lantern and revolver turned upon the rough, for he knew him to be a

desperate man, ready to seize the slightest advantage to turn the tables.

Fury, without further words, went out the door, and Bud Bright heard his retreating footsteps, which gave assurance that no treachery was intended.

The youth who had been so wide awake put up his revolver and light, and swung himself from the little loft to the floor below.

"I know who my enemy is now," he muttered as he went to the door. "Dan Fury! I'd rather have any one else. I've heard he has a bad record, and is looked upon as one of the worst men in Colorado. All the same, I'm here to accomplish something, and I shall have success or fight to the last breath. Fury and his ilk will find me a pretty tough knot to untie, if I am little."

Yes, he was small, as could be seen as he stood in the doorway with the moonlight falling upon him. That is, small as compared with a man of such proportions as Dan Fury. He would not weigh over one hundred and twenty-five pounds, but what he lacked in flesh was made up in suppleness and strength. He was a model of youthful vigor.

It was not strange that the name "Bright" had been bestowed upon him, for he had an exceedingly bright face, and his eyes were positively brilliant. They told, better than any words, of determination and fearlessness; of honesty and high purpose.

For dress, the youth wore a handsome flannel shirt with wide collar, substantial woolen pantaloons and stout shoes.

Like other new-comers to Colorado, he had found it desirable to conform to the custom of the country and wear a belt of weapons. His revolvers and knife were of the latest and best pattern.

As he stood on the threshold of the cabin he heard the footsteps of his late visitor die away in the distance.

"I wonder how that desperado knew my name was Willis?" he went on, communing with himself. "I have told it to no one in Magic City, or in Colorado, for that matter. Not that I fear to have it known, but I desire to have my mission as secret as possible. My success may depend on secrecy. It is evident, though, that the enemy is on to me. What could Dan Fury have wanted here to-night but *that paper?* What have I been spied upon for? To see if my researches are successful! I must be cautious, I know that. I have not seen the last of this big ruffian."

He smiled when he thought of how he had just defeated his enemy.

"It was a good scheme. He thought me out of town. Perhaps I'm a brighter boy than he at first supposed me. The name he was instrumental in giving me in derision may fit better than it was intended. At any rate, I'm satisfied with it, and shall use it in the future."

When he had arrived in Magic City about a week before, and had taken up his abode in this empty cabin on the outskirts of the town, he had gone on a stroll of observation through the place, and it was at this time that he received the name—"Bud Bright." It was bestowed by Dan Fury and a crowd of brother loafers, who, taking him for a tenderfoot, jeered him mercilessly as he passed a saloon where they stood.

Satisfied that his enemy would disturb him no more that night, the youth was about to turn back into the cabin and seek repose, when the hoof sounds of an approaching horse caused him to retain his listening attitude in the doorway.

The cabin was situated at the eastern limit of the town, and the Leadville trail ran past it. Consequently Bud Bright was in position to catch the first view of all travelers from the East.

The midnight rider was coming from that direction. Doubtless, however, he was no stranger, for a stranger would hardly travel into the place at midnight. Some belated citizen from the Magic Mine, thought the boy.

On came the horse, its iron-shod hoofs beating a metallic tattoo on the rough rock trail.

Soon the animal and its rider could be seen by the watcher, who kept his own form from view in the shadows.

The rider was a boy, evidently little older than Bud Bright, but heavier.

As he swept by the cabin he turned his face for a moment so that the moon shone fully upon it, and the watcher in the doorway shrunk back, with a little cry.

"A stranger, yes, and the last one I want here!" escaped his lips. "I thought I was rid of Cool Caleb, 'way out here; but, he is on my track!"

CHAPTER II.

A "PECOOLIAR" INDIVIDUAL.

WHAT Bud Bright saw when he took a survey of Magic City was about a hundred cabins, erected with more regularity as regarded street and direction than is the case with most mining-towns, and the principal buildings being as a matter of course, liquor resorts.

The general appearance of the place was that of an ordinary mining-town that is fairly prosperous.

There was nothing particularly characteristic about the town, except its reputation for being a very noisy place, where men carried their revolvers for something besides ornaments.

The inhabitants were, in greater part, a rough class of miners, who earned their gold only to spend it either at the bar or the gaming-table.

Only a few females lived in the town, the sole unmarried one being "Denton's Daughter." Denton was an oldish man with grizzled hair, who probably had a story to tell, but had never told it. It was generally understood, however, that he had fled to Colorado and to Magic City to escape the law for an alleged crime in the States. His daughter, who was then fifteen, had come with him, and had ever appeared content during their life of two years in Magic City, although denied the comforts and advantages of advanced civilization, to which she had evidently been accustomed.

She was a sweet girl, as fair and pure as a calla, and more than one rough miner cherished secret hopes of one day winning her for a wife.

It was jealousy which had led them to order the parson to leave town twelve months before our story. This jealousy was unfounded, however, as the girl cared for no one save her kind father, and treated attention from others coldly.

The old gentleman had "struck it" pretty well soon after settling in Magic City, and the few hours he worked with his pick and shovel each day brought him "yellow" in plenty for the needs of himself and daughter, and he was probably enabled to put away something besides. Indeed, the claim gave indication that great wealth lay beneath the soil, and all that was needed to gain it was a proper amount of labor and capital. But, Denton seemed satisfied with what he was able to secure single-handed.

Father and daughter were never disturbed by the men of the camp—the girl seldom so much as addressed. They lived in a secluded spot in the north end, and their wish to be left alone met as a general thing, with due respect.

However, they had an uninvited guest on the evening following Dan Fury's visit to Bud Bright and the advent of Cool Caleb into camp.

They were sitting in their plain but neatly furnished little cabin, saying little, but seemingly happy in each other's presence, and listening to the deep thunder that foretold a rapidly approaching storm, when the door was opened without ceremony and in strode a grotesque figure that brought Denton to his feet in surprise.

"Evenin', Denton! evenin', Dora!" saluted the stranger—for stranger he was in Magic City. "You must excuse me for my informality; I'm a pecooliar cuss, I am, an' never could spell er even pronounce the word 'ceremony.' It's a fine, large evenin'."

His pleasantry was not altogether lost on his hearers; although it received no reply, it served to bespeak his well-meaning and to apologize in a way for his strange appearance.

Truly he was a character. If his face had been that of an ordinary man his clothes were enough to make him outlandish; and if his clothes had been store-made his face would have excited attention in any crowd. Since both face and clothes were so unusual it may be readily imagined that his appearance was something decidedly remarkable.

His features were not coarse, but of an odd color, being a brownish yellow, which seemed a blending of tan and pallor. His eyes, cheeks and temples were sunken, the bones standing out with great prominence. Indeed, there seemed an absence of flesh on his body, so emaciated was he. And yet he did not look to be an invalid; his movements showed rather that he possessed sinew and strength.

His costume fully justified the remark that he was "pecooliar." It was composed of skins of various wild animals, fantastically made up, and gave him an air of uncivilization, if not of actual wildness.

Denton was not an uncivil man, and though he started up at the entrance of the intruder, he offered him no insult and returned to his chair, pointing, as he did so, to a third seat, which the caller proceeded to occupy, quite at his ease.

At this moment the storm, which had been threatening for a half-hour, broke with great fury, and the rain descended in torrents. So the stranger, if his mission were peaceable, was sure of an audience for some time, for Denton was not one to send a guest forth from his shelter to the mercy of the elements.

"Huh! kinder damp, ain't it?" remarked the caller, glancing out the little south window that overlooked the camp. "Jes' got my frame under roof in time, ef I do say it myself."

"A hard blow is soon delivered," said Denton, stroking his beard. "I guess the storm won't last long. Dora give our friend a cup of coffee."

The girl promptly arose to obey, as the "friend" gave a pleased smile and exclaimed;

"Wal, now, that's kind! I'm a cur'us individual, an' ef there's any thing I do like it's coffee. Up ter Pepper-box, where I kem frum, they don't hav much to drink but whisky straight.

"Whisky's a popular drink in Magic, but we prefer coffee," replied Denton. "It don't turn a man into a beast."

Dora placed the steaming cup (the evening meal had but lately been finished and the drink was still warm) in the man's hands and he sipped it with:

"Very much obliged, Dora. You do make beautiful coffee, ef I do say it myself. This affords me more genuine pleasure than I've had since I went to my mother-in-law's funeral, back in the States. It is beautiful coffee!"

Denton regarded him closely.

"Haven't I seen you before now?" he queried, suddenly.

"Huh! I don't know. I never traveled much. Ef you've seen me you'd oughter remember it."

"It does seem that way, especially if you were togged out as you are now," admitted the old man. "You say you're from Pepper-box?"

"Yep; jes' arriv', lately. Pepper-box is a unique place; ever been ther?"

"Never have, but I know its reputation. Are you one of its bad men?"

"Can't say that I am. I hav many pecooliar properties, but I'm not wicked, Denton. My name will tell ye that. I'm known all'ays ez Truthful James."

Father and daughter smiled slightly at the words and manner of the man.

"Well, since you know our names, our acquaintance is now complete," said Denton. "Do you mean to locate in Magic?"

"Done located. You're the first man I've called on."

Truthful James finished his coffee and set the empty cup on the table in the middle of the room.

Outside the storm still raged, though it was evident from the thunder that the clouds were passing.

"I suppose I ought to feel complimented," observed Denton, dryly, after a pause.

"Friends don't often hurt a honest man an' his daughter," replied the visitor; "I'm hyer to be yer friend, an' I want you to recognize me ez such. Will you?"

"At present I know no reason why I should not."

"I may be able ter sarve you some time. Dora,"—turning to Magic City's beautiful favorite—"do you know a young feller named Cool Caleb?"

"No, I never heard of him," was the candid answer.

"Huh! that's no wonder, since he jes' come hyer. He's a unique cuss, is Cool Caleb. He'll want to get acquainted with you an' call hyer."

"I don't receive callers," the girl informed her guest.

"Thet's good, in *his* case, anyhow, ef I do say it myself. Hev nothin' to do with him, Dora. He wuz never raised in a Sunday-school. You see, I know him."

"Is Bud Bright bad, also?" she asked, innocently.

"Not that I know of. It's my opinion that he's a good feller. Acquainted with Buddy?"

"I have seen him pass here, and father told me his name, or what the miners call him. Of course I shall have nothing to do with Cool Caleb."

"Is this cool young man from Pepper-box?" asked Denton.

"Ther rain's let up, I vum!" ejaculated Truthful James, unheeding the question. "Wal, Denton, I'll be goin'. I never stay long at one place—never. Why? It's ag'in' my constitutional breedin'. I'm a pecooliar cuss."

The strange character moved toward the door.

For an instant Denton seemed on the point of calling him back, and half-arose as if to detain him; then sunk back into his chair without a word.

"Evenin', Denton! Evenin', Dora!" said Truthful James, bowing, with his hand on the door. "My visit has 'forded me much pleasure—yes, indeed, if I do say it myself. Evenin', friends!"

"Good-evening!" was replied by father and daughter simultaneously, and their visitor passed out and closed the door behind him.

Denton soon became pre-occupied and restless. He slowly walked to and fro in the cabin, in an attitude of deep thought, and the questions and remarks of his daughter fell unheeded on his ears.

"Truthful James is *not* truthful!" he declared, all at once, and then again relapsed into silent meditation.

CHAPTER III.

A COOL YOUTH FROM KANSAS CITY.

The breaking of the thunder-storm awoke a youth who had passed most of the day slumbering in a cabin near the center of the town.

As a particularly heavy clap of thunder smote his ears, he sat up on his cot, rubbed his eyes for a moment to get them fully open, and then arose to his feet.

He had not gone to the trouble of removing his clothes, so he escaped the worry of dressing.

"You haven't slept any since I saw you last, I guess," observed a man who sat regarding him on the opposite side of the room. "I'm ready ter believe ye'r' one of the seven sleepers. You've been like a log all day."

"I haven't slept much before for a week," returned the youth, "and, besides, I was tired out with the hard journey to Magic City. I was bound to get here before I stopped to rest. Any liver-regulator, Dan?"

"That's right, call me Dan, and you can't begin practicin' on ther name any too soon. How does this strike you?"

The young man took the bottle extended to him, and drank from it with apparent satisfaction.

"Good!" said he. "Now, old man, I want something to chew. I'm as empty as the cradle when baby's gone."

"I've got a big job ef I've got ter fill you up," replied Dan Fury. "But I'm fixed fer you, Caleb. Set up to ther table that."

The young man from the East took his seat at the place designated, and the host set before him a very comfortable repast, to which he immediately began doing justice.

Fury resumed his seat and the conversation.

"How'd you leave things in Kansas City, Caleb, and how's Chief Speers?"

"All right. The chief has not sought my company lately, for I'm a little too smart. He has never been able to prove anything on me. Did you get my last letter, a week ago?"

"Yes."

"And Willis is hyer?"

"Yes. You passed his cabin comin' inter ther camp las' night."

"Has he found his prize yet?"

"No, but he hunts fer it diligently. You see, thar hev been so many changes in two years it's hard ter locate ther spot exactly. But he's liable ter hit on it any time."

"What's your plan if he does?"

Fury's evil face took on a suggestive smile, but he did not reply to the question. "By ther way," he said, "I hed jest been visitin' ther boy when you come las' night."

"Get the paper, Daniel?"

"Halifax! no! Ther boy wuz at home, an' he's a reg'lar little torpedo. He got ther drop on me by impish strategy. About dark he rode away from camp on ther west trail, equipped fer a long journey, an' I never thought ov it bein' a trick an' thet he would sneak back an' watch fer visitors. He's a slick coon. He'd caught on ter bein' watched an' laid ther trap."

Fury had doubtless been astonished to learn that Bud Bright was aware of the shadowing to which he had been subjected. The rough was a sharp worker. But, Bright was no ordinary boy, that was evident. The defeat of his plans could be compassed by no ordinary tactics.

"I kin fetch him," declared Caleb, with a scowl. "Now he's out here away from the law, I'll settle scores and settle our trouble fer good. I'll get that paper, Dan, and don't you forget it!"

"I'm willing," responded Fury. "Though you'll hev yer hands full attendin' to ther sweet Dora. And don't let Bud Bright cut you out, Caleb."

"Bud Bright?"

"Thet's ther name Willis is known by here. We give it ter him in fun, an' it hez stuck to him, ez he never told his right name."

The youth stopped eating for a moment, and

the scowl deepened on his features. Apparently the suggestion that his enemy would "cut him out," was unpleasant to him.

"I've come too far fer the prize to lose it," he uttered, savagely. "He'll not dare to interfere with me, even if he has the chance, which he won't. I kin be deadly as well as cool in a game of this kind!"

"You're made ov ther right stuff, Caleb. Go on with yer feed. The man that hints we won't win the points in our little game, is the champion liar ov ther Territory."

The guest continued his eating, asking presently:

"Is the girl really all you pictured her?"

"She certainly am! She hez developed inter one ov ther purtiest creatures I ever saw. Col-orado air hez been good fer her."

"How old is she?"

"Seventeen, I'm thinkin'."

"And the mine—did you examine it yourself?"

"I did, fer a fact. And while it won't compare with ther Magic, it's my opinion, Caleb, that it's quite a bonanza. I guess you won't sneeze at it ef it comes inter your possession."

"Do you ever talk to Denton, and does he ever say anything about Kansas City?"

"He don't talk to anybody much, and never says nothin' about old times. But he begs fer a letter ever time ther mail comes inter town, so I think he's got somebody at work fer him. Did yer ever hear ov anybody?"

"No. I suspicioned there was one for awhile, but never knew for certain. If there was, he's thrown now, eh? Does Denton ever get a letter?"

"Once in a while, but it don't do any good, fer he's jest ez anxious fer ther next one."

"Then his man has not succeeded, you see. Daniel, that was the neatest job I ever heard of. Kansas City will not forget it for a long time."

Fury chuckled, and lit a big pipe.

Cool Caleb finished his meal and began puffing a cigar. He had queer, sharp eyes, much like his companion's good one, that blinked curiously in the blue smoke. They gave his face an unpleasant expression—"crafty," a judge of human nature would say. Cool Caleb, though not much beyond his majority in years, was one of the craftiest men in the whole West!

The two seemed to have a great deal to say to each other. For more than an hour they smoked and talked continuously. The storm ceased, the clouds cleared away, and the shades of approaching night began to fall athwart the gold-camp.

Finally they were interrupted by the opening of the cabin door and the entrance of a man coatless and hatless, and who staggered in as if drunk or badly wounded.

Fury got up quickly and went forward.

"What is it, Mack?" he exclaimed, observing the man closely; then, seeing his condition—"Satan! thar's blood on yer shirt!"

Mack leaned heavily against the wall and ground an oath through his teeth.

"I want you ter git vengeance fer this, Dan. I b'lieve I've caught ther bullet in my life-box. Go an' send ther animal to Tartarus!"

"Who done it? Tell me, and by Joseph! I'll make 'im smart fer it! You hevn't hed trouble with one o' the pards!"

"No; ther storm blew in from somewhar a critter that don't deserve ther name ov man. I'd call 'im a human skeleton ef he wuzn't more like a beast. He done it!"

"But, what wuz ther trouble? Out with it, Powder Mack!"

The wounded rough was unable to respond for a moment. The blood on his breast was gradually coloring the whole front of his shirt, and his breath came in gasps.

He recovered his strength of speech with an effort.

"Can't you guess?" he exclaimed. "Three er four ov us wuz at ther Parlor. He took our sport all right until, when he wouldn't pay fer drinks, he got a little touch o' whisky in ther face. Then he seemed ter be double-jinted lightnin'. Thet bony arm ov his must be made ov iron. I wuz ther fu'st one up, an' in two seconds I would hev carved 'im like a pig, but ther devil gave me *this*."

The words were followed by a groan that made Fury swell with indignation.

"Whar is he now?" he asked.

"I left 'im at ther Parlor, with his hand close to his shooter an' his eyes on ther pards. Go an' git ther drop, Dan, an' kill 'im!"

"I'll avenge ye, don't be afeard o' that," Powder Mack was assured. "No anomaly kin shoot an' live in this camp, while I kin lift a six-shooter! Lie down ther, an' while I play a game at the Parlor, you dress his wound, Caleb."

I'll execute yer commission, Powder, er you kin hook me fer a salmon!"

Fury went out the door and strode up the rain-drenched street with the air of an aroused lion. Surely his name, be it real or assumed, was an apt one.

His instructions to the men in the cabin were obeyed. Powder Mack's strength had been almost exhausted in coming for Fury to take up his cause, and it was not without Caleb's assistance that he managed to cross the room to the cot.

The young man from Kansas City did all that he could for his host's friend. The wound in the breast was an ugly one, but whether deadly or not it was uncertain. Caleb bandaged it carefully and stayed the flow of blood.

It was not a great distance to the "Parlor." Fury was there in two minutes. At the door he paused and looked in.

The place was a store and drinking resort, the bar extending across the back end of the room, and the stock of merchandise being in front.

Never was a name more inappropriate than the one bestowed upon this haunt by the paradoxical mountaineers. The Parlor had witnessed more drunken affrays than any two houses in the camp.

While Fury still stood at the door, trying to catch sight of his enemy and gain the drop before presenting himself, the man whom Powder Mack had rudely but sufficiently described suddenly appeared on the threshold.

As the avenging desperado caught a fair view of his face, instead of raising his weapon he shrank back with a startled exclamation!

CHAPTER IV.

PERIL AT THE PARLOR.

DAN FURY was unnerved for the moment.

"Thet razor-face is strangely like ther sick man's on ther Wildcat trail!" he muttered. "But, thet man—died. I know it.—Perdition! what am I hyer fer?"

He was himself again. One of the huge revolvers that habitually graced his belt was drawn. "I'm not chicken-hearted, ter be scared by ther silly memory ov a face. All ther gospel-slingers in America couldn't make me believe this wuz him. Dan Fury's hyer fer business!"

The stranger had paused for a moment in the doorway to glance back at the men who might take advantage of his back to give him a bullet. He was cool and fearless, and in his movement there was a suspicion of defiance toward the desperadoes who had forced their rough sport on the wrong man and been sadly worsted.

He was unprepared for an attack from the outside, at that moment. Standing as he was in the full light of the saloon's lamps, he failed to see the dark figure of Dan Fury five steps away.

Just as he was stepping from the threshold he felt a violent hand on his shoulder and was shoved backward into the room, with such force that he with difficulty kept his feet.

"You nondescript—you crazy vagabond, I want to see you!" was howled in his ear. "You've got ter answer fer the blood ov Powder Mack!"

It might have been well for Truthful James if he had prolonged his visit at Denton's cabin.

He found himself in a desperate situation, facing the menacing weapon of Magic City's notorious bully.

Taken at a disadvantage, he was completely at his enemy's mercy, but, his thin, sallow face held no expression of fear; instead, it was calm, though rage smoldered in his eyes.

"Magic City takes no insults from a tramp from the grave!" Dan Fury went on. "The wind tricked you when it blew you inter this burg. We are all pards hyer, an' when you smite one you smite all. Great Tophet! hev you never heard ov Magic's vengeance?"

Truthful James's jeopardy was enhanced at this moment by the approach of the men whom he had vanquished in the back part of the room, and by the entrance of others at the door.

"No, I can't say thet I hev," he said coolly in reply to his foe's angry question. "I'm a pecooliar cuss, I am, an' never read up much on vengeance. What's the law?"

"Blood fer blood!" was the savage answer. "By Satan! you die now! Powder Mack's blood calls for atonement!"

Fury's weapon clicked twice.

Then came a shot, sudden, loud—and the desperado dropped his revolver with a wild, hoarse cry!

It was not his weapon that had spoken, but

that of some enemy, some friend of Truthful James, for the latter was uninjured, and through Fury's hand was a bleeding wound!

The shot had come from the darkness beyond the door.

The spectators answered it with mad imprecations, and their hands were quickly holding glistening weapons, while with one accord all leaped toward the door, ready to visit speedy vengeance on the unknown for his shot of interference.

"Fifty dollars ter the man thet brings ther assassin hyer!" cried Fury, as the dozen roughs sprung into the darkness. He was in a fearful rage. His features were contorted with pain and fury, his body writhed in his frenzy.

And while the flame of his passion was raging at its height, he suddenly discovered himself alone in the saloon with his enemy, with that enemy's revolver leveled full at his head!

The tables had been turned.

Truthful James had taken advantage of the confusion.

"Hands up, boss!" he commanded, his very tone a threat. "Hands up! I'm a cur'us cuss, an' sometimes shoot and talk afterwards."

The desperado obeyed.

"Right face!" Truthful James continued, his finger dangerously near the trigger, "right face, march! An' lower a hand ther breadth ov a finger an' you're a victim, shore as heaven! March lively, there, you devil janizary!"

The "right face, march," took Fury toward the back end of the saloon, and he covered the distance to the bar at a good pace.

All at once three or four shots rang out behind him, in quick succession, and every light in the room was shattered, all being instantly extinguished but one, and this played havoc, terrible and undesigned.

It was Truthful James's plan to escape in the darkness, but the flaring flame of the lamp caught the spilling oil; there was a sudden, great, bright blaze, and the room was afire!

The "peculiar" man's life now depended on instant action, for he knew that his shots and the flames would bring the search for his friend to a quick close, and he would again receive the undivided attention of the men who thirsted for his blood.

Without delay he bounded out the door, and that he was not a moment too soon it was at once evident. He heard a shout and a shot not far away, and a bullet struck the weatherboards behind him with an unpleasantly suggestive sound.

Then he passed into the darkness, where he was comparatively safe from recognition, for night had now fairly settled down on Magic City, and the moon had not appeared.

As he made his way among the cabins he could hear the yells at the parlor, and, turning once, he saw the eager flames leaping up the building's side almost to the roof. The ruffian resort was doomed.

He did not stand to watch the progress of the flames, but continued rapidly toward the northern part of the camp, presently halting before the door of a one-roomed shanty, whose door swung open ere he touched it, with a sharp "Hello!" to him.

Truthful James replied with an easy laugh.

"Hush! You're hyer, Sierra! A lively lad you are!"

"I thought you'd come," said the man who had blocked the entrance, as Truthful James entered. "I've not been back long. Where have you been?"

"Texas! don't you know? Didn't you save my life, Steve?"

The two men faced each other in the dim candlelight, with curious expressions on their faces.

"I save yer life? Not that I know of," replied Sierra.

"You didn't shoot Dan Fury at ther Parlor ez he hed ther drop on me?"

"I hav'n't seen ther Parlor since mornin'. I just got in from ther mine."

"That's strange. Then I've got another friend in camp," decided Truthful James, puzzled.

"Was Fury killed?"

"No, he only got a hole in his hand. He meant ter shoot me, an' some one interfered from the dark outside. Look at ther fire! That's the Parlor."

As the two stood at the window and gazed at the red blaze that ascended from the lost saloon, Sierra Steve was told all about the trouble that resulted in the conflagration.

"It wasn't my plan ter make enemies hyer, at present, but it couldn't be helped," Truthful James concluded. "It changes the aspect of

affairs, and you ought to be hyer now, Steve. Could you leave the mine?"

"Yes, for the storm swept away ther Ghost Cabin, and ther shaft's half-full o' water!"

"Jericho! that'll make Fury swar! You hevn't told 'im yet?"

"No, but I'll go ter him now, I guess. Hark! thar's some one at the door!"

The words were hardly spoken when the door was unceremoniously flung open.

CHAPTER V.

YOUTHFUL ENEMIES.

JUST beyond the light of the flames from the Parlor, in the dark shadows of a cabin, stood a youth of supple build, watching with interest the scene of conflagration.

As the mad exclamations of the excited roughs, who stood around helplessly and gazed on the destruction of their favorite resort, came to his ears, he laughed softly to himself and muttered half-aloud:

"Magic City loses little when the Parlor turns to ashes. Every board of the place is doomed, and I'm glad of it, if it's only to enrage and defeat Dan Fury and his henchmen. I wonder what Dan would give for the heads of his enemies served up in chargers. I'm worth fifty dollars myself—at any rate, that's what I heard him offer."

He was interrupted. Between him and the firelight a dark figure suddenly appeared, the figure of a youth slightly heavier than himself, who paused a few feet away, causing him to step back in alarm. Simultaneously with the sudden appearance he caught the glimmer of a weapon, the click-click of which was both a command and a threat.

The young men readily recognized each other. The new-comer was the first to speak.

"Hullo, Willis—or Bud Bright, Fury says. Have you forgotten me?"

"Can't say that I have, Caleb," replied the youth, who had been standing alone in the shadows. "You have a way of keeping yourself in the memory of your acquaintances."

"Good quality that, don't you think so, Bud? You see, this is a pleasant little surprise I put up on you, interrupting your Colorado meditations. Though you are far away from home, you see I still live."

"You have followed me, Caleb!"

"Don't mention it, Buddy. As an old friend who has an interest in you—"

"There—don't get humorous. Your song might suddenly change to a wail. What are you here for?—because I am, or is Chief Speers after you?"

Cool Caleb's bantering tone became one full of venom. The devil in his nature could not be concealed long at a time.

"I don't see that it's any of your cursed business!" was his retort. "I'll tell you this much: my presence here means no good to you! I hate you as much as ever."

"I supposed as much," retorted Bud Bright, adding cuttingly: "I'm not one who would always rather have the friendship of a dog than his ill-will."

Bud Bright and Cool Caleb had been enemies for years, in Kansas City. As boys they had attended the same school, when between them bad developed trouble which had been carried, later, into business life. Caleb was a human serpent, who had proved an evil genius in many a plan of his enemy, and caused him harm at every possible opportunity. He had earned the appellation of "Cool Caleb" because he was so cool and deliberate in the execution of his schemes of mischief.

First they had become enemies over a trifling matter. Caleb, naturally bad, never sought to heal the breach between them, but on the contrary to widen it. And Bright had found himself the possessor of a foe who needed constant watching in order to thwart his machinations. Caleb drifted from bad to worse, became a frequenter of low resorts, and, beyond doubt in the minds of those who knew him, a criminal; but, although he was arrested a number of times, his guilt was not proven.

Time had not alleviated his feeling of hatred. Instead, it seemed to have strengthened it. Had he tracked Bud Bright to Magic City in order to defeat him in his great western purpose? The "little torpedo" certainly had reason to think so.

Although Bright had nearly always come out victor in their difficulties, the fact only added to the zest with which Caleb sought to harass his life. Is it a wonder that Bright recoiled the night before when he saw his foe ride into the mountain town, a spot hundreds of miles from

where he had left him, and left him ignorant, as he supposed, of his destination?

Bright's last remark brought an oath to Caleb's lips.

"I'm the boy who can cram sech insults down yer throat," he uttered. "There's a difference between this town and Kansas City in the matter of settling insults, don't forget *that!* And, by heavens! Bud Bright, as they call you, I'd love to take advantage at this moment of that difference to give you a bullet from my dropper!"

Caleb looked as if he meant every word, as he bent forward with blazing eyes, and finger at the trigger. But, Bright was utterly fearless.

"That's one truth to your credit, Caleb," he returned, easily. "I know you have long had a bullet for me. But—excuse the change of subject—how did you know I was at Magic City?"

"I saw you buy your ticket at Kansas City."

"That's not so!"

"Well, a friend did."

"But my ticket only took me to Leadville. Tracked me from there, did you?"

"No, I didn't. Durn it, I knew you were coming here. What's more, I knew you were on the hunt of a bonanza!"

Bud Bright vouchsafed no reply, and Caleb went on:

"I know something else, too, you confounded gopher! It was a ball from *your* shooter that perforated Fury's palm! Don't deny it! I saw you dodge a searcher and take your position hyer in the dark. Dan wants to see you *bad*, just now. Thet human tempest will swipe you off the face of the earth!"

"You say he *will*?"

"Ain't I got the drop? Thar's one way you can escape him, though."

"How's that? Turn the tables?"

"Not exactly. Lead me to yer cabin and give me the paper to the bonanza!"

Bud Bright emitted a soft whistle.

"Well, now, mebbe I've got it right with me in my pocket," he suggested.

"I guess not," responded Caleb. "There's too much danger in that; and, besides, common wrapping paper is not leather;—that piece is tender as well as precious, and would quickly wear out in the pocket. Oh, no—you have the contents all in your head, Willis, and the paper is in some snug place in the cabin."

The youth with the drop failed to see the look of astonishment that swept his enemy's face as "wrapping paper" was mentioned. And yet he must have known his knowledge was surprising, for doubtless Bright was ready to swear that no one alive had ever seen the paper except himself.

"Do you accept the terms?" Caleb asked. "Refuse, and by the blazing stars! you march to the Mountain Tempest at once!"

Bright recognized the fact that he was in for it, and there was too much business about him to attempt to argue the matter.

Neither did he offer a doubt that his guilt would be proven were he delivered into Dan Fury's hands; a denial from him, even if he cared to lie in self-defense, would have no weight against the testimony of his captor, in the minds of a mad Parlor judge and jury.

"It's hard to choose between two evils," he remarked, dissembling; "but, I guess it's death or the paper, so the paper goes. I live at the East End, Caleb."

"Lead the way," commanded the visitor. "And don't let yer memory slip on the fact that I've got you dead to rights, and at the first break we'll make a sieve out of you!"

Bright started off at a brisk pace, with Caleb close at his heels. It is needless to say the route did not take them near the Parlor, for the young bonanza-hunter did not care to rush straight from the frying-pan into the fire.

Magic City was not a metropolis, and in five minutes the captive announced that their journey was at an end, at the same time throwing open the door of his home.

"You're treacherous as Satan, Willis!" Caleb suddenly exclaimed, with his foot on the threshold. "I'll keep my hand on you until you light a dip, and then put down yer weapons. By Judas! there's to be no bad points in this game! You can work the torpedo racket on Fury, but nothin' shall mar *my* hour of triumph!"

Bud Bright laughed in a manner child-like and bland.

"Don't be nervous, Caleb," he said, as he fumbled with his right hand for a match, while his left was seized by his enemy, as a precaution against a sudden dodge or game of any kind in the darkness. "You've got me in your power and I must make the best of it."

Caleb was not so certain of his success but that he was sharply alert, with his revolver in position to bring an instant termination to any effort of his enemy's to escape.

Bright soon found a match and struck it on the boards of the rough table. It blazed up in a red, strong flame, revealing a tallow candle close at hand; instead of applying the lucifer to the wick, however, he cast it straight into his captor's face!

It put Caleb into more of a panic than a bullet would have done. He fell back precipitately, completely off his guard.

Bright, quick as a flash, darted upon his disconcerted foe, struck the revolver from his hand as the last ray of the match expired on the floor, and threw him headlong toward the door!

"The 'torpedo racket' won't work, eh?" he cried, as he sprung after the fallen youth. "I guess you'll find I'm able to take care of myself, even in Magic City!"

The young rough would have gained his feet in a moment, but the other fell upon him with the fury of a catamount and proceeded to administer a severe punishment with his fists.

"I've got my dander up!" cried Bud between his swift and heavy blows. "You've got to learn to keep clear of me. You've pestered me about long enough, and for following me out here to Magic City and interfering in my affairs, I ought to stave in your head, to say the least! But for this time I'll let you off with a beautiful pair of black eyes, a broken nose and blubber lips!"

At length Bud desisted, and arose to his feet. His enemy slowly followed him, very badly discomfited.

No sooner was Caleb up than he was seized by the collar and forcibly and inelegantly ejected through the door of the cabin, and the door was slammed behind him.

CHAPTER VI.

A MAD DESPERADO.

ALTHOUGH the interruption at Sierra Steve's cabin was so sudden and unexpected, had the person been an enemy he would have been given a warm reception; for as the door swung open Truthful James's revolver leaped from his belt.

It was immediately restored, however, as a view of the caller was obtained, and both men gave evidence of surprise.

The visitor was none other than Dora, Magic City's beautiful favorite! She made a charming picture as she stood animated, erect in the doorway in the uncertain candlelight.

But she gave the two men no time for admiration. She was manifestly excited, and her call was not one of social formality.

"I have come for you, Truthful James!" she exclaimed. "I saw you enter here this evening and thought it must be your home. Were you in earnest when you said you would be a friend to father and me?"

"Huh! I wuz thet, Dora! I'm—"

"Then will you help me now? I fear father is killed! Powder Mack has turned demon! he shot father, and is in my room now, raving like a maniac! Will you help me, Truthful James?"

Truthful James strode to the door.

"Make yer report ter Fury, ez ye started, Sierra," he said to his pard. "I'm goin' ter step over hyer an' throw a feller named Powder Mack inter ther Pacific! Come on, Dora, I'm yer firin' squad!" and Truthful and the favorite hurried away, the night made lurid by the burning Parlor.

"I shall be grateful to you always for this service, Truthful James," said the girl. "I had no pistol to protect myself, so I had to run to escape."

"Thar's nothin' I wouldn't gladly do fer a gal who kin make coffee like you," James replied. "I'm a peculiar cuss, I am, an' I glory in fun o' this kind. Nothin' suits me better than ther prospect ov a prize-fight with Powder Mack."

"I fear the ruffian has killed my poor father!"

"He'll pay fer it if he hez, dast 'im! Thet feller is a unique critter, ef I do say it myself. I thort I done 'm up fer good an hour ago."

"He was badly wounded. His breast was bandaged."

"He's one ov them fellers you hev ter kill entirely ter stop their' meanness. It'll be a cur'us circumstance ef I don't stop 'im *this* trip. I'm howlin' glad ye come ter me, little gal, fer help. Ye did jest right shore ez shootin' in."

They reached the cabin. They heard a heavy tread inside, and loud talking.

"Let's squint at ther animal through ther

winder," suggested the rescuer, "jes' ter see what ie's up ter, anyway."

Looking through the window they saw Powder Mack stalking to and fro in the room, flourishing two great six-shooters dangerously. His shirt hung open in front and across his breast could be seen the bandages with which Caleb had bound his wound. His face was distorted into the expression of a ferocious beast, as he kept up a meaningless raving.

"He is a maniac, Dora, I yum!" James remarked, in a low tone. "Look at them eyes! Tell ye what, his wound hez turned his brain. He hain't got enough sense ter last 'im ter bed, at ther present writin'. But sense er no sense, I'll stop his rippin' up a peaceful household, durn his unique pictur'!"

"Do you see father?" Dora inquired.

"Nup. Cain't see 'im nowhar. Where did he fall when he wuz shot?"

"Between the table and the door. He was advancing to meet the intruder, who had just jumped from a horse and kicked open the door."

"Wal, he ain't thar, sartain. Mebbe he's escaped. Now, Dora, ter squelch that cuss. You'll hev ter help me."

"Help? Well?"

"Tap on ther winder till yer ketch his attention. He'll rush thar ter see what it is, an' while his back's ter ther door I'll step in an' pulverize 'im. See?"

"I'll do what you say," assented Denton's Daughter. "But, Mr. James, you must not endanger yourself—"

"Huh! Thar—don't be skeery, gal. I'm a cur'us person, ter never git hurt in a scrimmage."

"Now, pound ther winder!"

Truthful took his position at the door, and the girl obeyed him by rattling the window panes loudly, at the same time keeping back from the light.

The truthful individual heard an unusually loud growl from the crazy rough within, and marked his footsteps as he strode in a rage to the window to investigate.

At what he conceived to be the right moment, James softly but quickly opened the door, and with the spring of a panther pounced upon the unsuspecting Powder Mack, and with an adroit movement tripped him and flung him heavily to the floor.

It was astonishing to see the qualities of Truthful James's emaciated limbs. Never was a human appearance more deceptive than that of the odd individual "from Pepper-box."

The mad desperado struggled like a freshly-branded bull; but with a grip at his throat like a steel vise, and his arms pinioned to the floor beneath him, he found himself powerless to move his unseeen and terrible foe.

Dora, entering the cabin, intuitively recognized a need of her friend's, and hastily brought a small, strong rope, with which the arms of the rough were securely bound behind his back.

His weapons were then removed, and he was rolled over so that he could get a view of his captor, whose heel upon his neck made him still helpless to rise.

The eyes of the maniac burned like balls of polished steel. Woe to his foes if he gained the mastery!

"Ye're a bold, bad man, if I do say it myself," averred Truthful, calmly, not at all ruffled by the encounter. "Mebbe, ez this is most likely yer last night on earth, ye're tryin' ter do somethin' ter be remembered by. Consarn ye, keep still!"

The heel was pressed heavily upon the thick, bronzed throat, and the desperado had sense enough to cease his struggles.

"This biz'ness hez started yer wound ter bleedin' ag'in," the man from Pepper-box went on, "an' it's my opinion you won't want nothin' by mornin' but about seven feet o' earth, unless that's a change in you."

"Hev you found Denton, Dora?"

"No, he is not here," replied the distressed girl. "What could have become of him?"

"Now, I never waz much on riddles," was the response. "Cur'us, too, ain't it? Lemme see. Did ye say Powder Mack rode up hyer?"

"Yes, he came right up to the door with his horse in a gallop."

"What became ov the hoss?"

"I can't answer. When I ran from the cabin it was standing near by."

"An' Denton wuz lyin' on ther floor thar? When we kem back, ther animal wuz gone an' Denton wuz gone. Mebbe they left in company, little gal."

The maiden's face flushed.

"I hope it is no worse!" she breathed fervently.

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There was a short silence, broken by the question:

"What harm hez this devil done hyer, Dora?"

"No real harm, only to my father, I think," was the reply, as she surveyed the room. "He has knocked everything over that was in his way, but broken nothing, I guess."

"He didn't get his hands on you, did he?"

"No; he didn't seem to see me when he came in, as I shrunk into a corner. He didn't seem to notice father, either, after he shot him. He just went about the room, raving and swearing, as you saw him. I ran out when his back was turned, and went to you."

"I'm thinkin'," said Truthful James, deliberately, "that Powder Mack never kem hyer with any bloody purpose—he wuz jest on a crazy tear, an' didn't know nothin' he done. He hed got away frum his doctor, whoever he wuz, stole a hoss, an' jest chanced ter strike your cabin fur his circus. I guess he hain't responsible fer all this mischief. I'm goin' ter take him ter his friends."

The girl did not realize the significance of this last declaration, did not know how daring was the idea, for she was unaware of the fact that her friend and Powder Mack's friends were deadly enemies.

"You hain't afraid ter stay hyer, are ye, Dora? Keep one o' them pistols at hand, and shoot ther fu'st p'izen kiote that molests you!"

"I shall not be afraid," was the answer of the brave girl. "I shall keep prepared as you advise. But—"

"Yer father, eh?"

"Yes—"

"He shell be found, you bet! Rest quiet on *that* p'int, honey! Now, ter take this unique cuss ter the doctor ag'in. I yum! he's not ez lively ez he wuz. Gittin' weak, shore. Come, git up hyer, Mack!"

The desperado was given no time to consider whether he should obey or disobey; he was all at once landed on his feet by main strength.

Then, grasping the cords at his back, Truthful James marched him unresistingly out of the cabin.

They were going to Dan Fury!

CHAPTER VII. BOLDNESS WINS.

THE Parlor was not the only saloon in town, so after its destruction the roughs of Magic City made another, "No. 2," as it was called, their headquarters.

It was not so pretentious a place as the one destroyed, but it had for sale equally as bad liquor, and liquor was what they wanted after their hot experience in watching the Parlor burn down. It assuaged their wounded feelings and afforded them general relief.

As we look in upon the crowd at No. 2, a short while after the destruction caused by Truthful James's bullet is complete, we find them gathered about Dan Fury, who had just entered, discussing in grim tones the events of the night.

Fury leans against the rough edge of the bar, his one fierce eye still speaking of the terrible passion within him. In all probability he has but returned from his home, for his bullet-pierced hand is well bandaged with clean cloth, from which the fumes of camphor come.

Cool Caleb is there, but the "tempest" has not seen him. He is alone at a table, as nearly out of sight as he can get, sullenly sipping the contents of a glass. The truth is, Caleb's features, after their numerous forcible contacts with Bud Bright's hard fists, are not very presentable. The blows have told upon him, and there are a number of suggestive black marks about his eyes, nose and mouth. He has received a pretty severe lesson. It is a question, however, whether he will profit by it, for his brain is full of plans for revenge.

"Does anybody know the name ov ther skunk that's at the bottom ov all this?" savagely came from Fury.

No answer.

"Wal, he's ther meanest insect that ever crawled in Colorado. Don't know whar he's frum, I reckon!"

No answer.

"I guess it war ez Powder Mack said, ther storm blew him in frum somewhar—nowhar in partic'lar. I'd wish ther storm ter blow him out again, but I want ter git hold ov him. By Jernalemi pards ov Magic, that's deadly pay fer sech work ez he has done! H'll wish he never saw Magic City. But blowin' him in waz not ther only bad turn ther storm done me."

"What else, cap'n?"

"Sierra Steve, the foreman o' ther Magic Mine, told me five minutes ago ther office hed been swept away an' ther shaft had several

feet ov water in it. How's that ter make a saint sw'ar?"

"Thet's blamed bad, Dan—blamed bad. It'll take a good deal o' trouble ter git things straight ag'in."

"Yes, an' thar's no one who kin do ther work like Powder Mack. He would go at it ter-morrow, but he's got a cursod bullet in 'im. By ther way, what is Powder Mack?"

"Dunno. Why?"

"Wuz'n't he at your cabin, Dan?"

"He wuz at my cabin, yes. But he ain't thar now. He come ter me ter avenge him, an' I left him an' Cool Caleb thar. But when I went back ter bind up my hand both wuz gone."

"Who's Cool Caleb?"

"Thet's so, you fellers don't know ther cool young sport from Kansas City," said Fury, pausing to swallow a glass of whisky. "He's an old friend of mine. He jest got in last night, an' slept 'most all day. A thoroughbred, he is."

"Cool 'un, is he?"

"Cool ez an ice-berg in a fight. He's only a small feller, too—small, but turrible."

Two or three of the men involuntarily glanced at the young stranger behind them at the table. Fury observed them, and following their gaze, immediately recognized Cool Caleb.

"Thar he is, by Joseph! Come up hyer, Caleb. I wuz wonderin' whar you wuz."

Discovered, there was nothing for the youth but to obey, and he quit his seat and joined the crowd.

He didn't look much like a thoroughbred as he came slowly up with a black, sheepish face—sheepish in spite of his efforts to look indifferent.

"What in Hail Columbia is ther matter with yer?" Fury demanded, noting the dark, tell-tale bruises. Then, without waiting for a reply, he continued. "Pards ov Magic, tuis is Cool Caleb. He's a true blue, dyed-in-the-wool, and yer do well ter know him."

The introduction was acknowledged by both parties, and their friendship "clinched" with a drink all round at Caleb's expense.

"I'm not very presentable, I guess," said Caleb, apologetically. "My beauty was spoiled to large extent within the last hour."

"What's ther trouble, pard?" Fury repeated.

The cool youth was always able to improvise plausible excuses.

"Why, I left Powder Mack in the cabin after I dressed his wounds, and started up toward the Parlor, which was just beginning to burn. I'd got no distance hardly till I was jumped on by two galoots who used their revolvers as clubs, and rather got the best of me. Though I fancy I warmed 'em up in a way they despised."

"Who wuz the critters, Caleb?"

"You got me, Dan. Of course, being a stranger here, I was as ignorant of their names as I was surprised at the attack. I thought at first they meant to rob me, but I think now murder was intended, though why they should want to kill a stranger is a mystery to me. I didn't have time to draw a weapon, but I was able to defeat their purpose with my fists. I got in a good right and left on each one, and they skipped. But they had left their mark, as you see by my blooming countenance."

Caleb told the story in an exceedingly cool and modest manner. It aroused the admiration of the Magic pards.

"By Jerusalem! two ter one is a durned sin!" growled Fury. "Tried ter kill ye, eh? and yer knocked 'em out with yer fists?"

"Well, I got away," responded Caleb, in an off-hand manner.

"An' yer don't know who ther gophers wuz? Describe 'em! By Joseph! you kin describe 'em!"

Caleb contracted his brows thoughtfully.

"I can do that, yes," said he. "One was a youngster about my size, only lighter in weight, I think—"

"Eh?"

The pards glanced at each other.

"Only one sech in town," remarked one.

"It wus Bud Bright, shore ez judgment," said Fury, conclusively. "Go on, Caleb."

"The other—I'm not likely to forget him," the youth continued; "I guess he had just got loose from a grave-yard. He was a skeleton clothed in animal skins—"

There was a general exclamation.

"We know him," grated the big tough. "See that hand? It would hev been his death ere he saw you but fer a bullet from ther dark—a bullet fired by Bud Bright, I'll bet a gold mine! Thar's no doubt ther two are pards. Thet grave-yard beast is ther one that shot Powder Mack, ye know, Caleb."

"Thet's so. I remember how Mack described him, when he come to the cabin."

"I want ter tell you fellers something!" Dan Fury resumed, bringing his sledge-hammer fist down on the bar. "Them two are public enemies, an' should be shot on sight. Magic City hez received a deadly insult this night, an' it kin be settled only in blood. As fer 'het little upstart, Bud Bright, I've got a bad hand hyer, but I'll manage ter git ther drop on him. Jest leave him ter me. As fer his pard, the devil that shot Powder Mack, and burned ther Parlor, I want you fellers ter sw'ar with me ter shoot him on sight. We'll take an oath right hyer to hev him under ground afore sundown ter-morrow. He hez come ter our peaceful burg, an' made a score that kin be wiped out only with his life!"

"We're ther men ter wipe out sech scores, Dan!" cried a burly tough. "Sw'ar us, ef yer want!"

Dan Fury's right hand was raised, and every right hand in the room followed suit.

"Sw'ar you will hev vengeance fer Powder Mack an' ther Parlor, an' fer Cool Caleb, ther minute you see ther foe!"

"We sw'ar!"

The oath was a deep chorus. The desperados of Magic City were in terrible earnest.

The hands were lowered, and the crowd indulged in another drink, this time almost in silence.

"What become ov Powder Mack?" Dan Fury suddenly inquired of Cool Caleb.

"If he leit the cabin I don't know anything about him," replied the youth. "When I came away he was lying on the bed with his eyes closed."

"Not dead?" quickly.

"No—"

"Hyer's Powder Mack!"

The crowd in No. 2 were astounded to see Powder Mack, hatless, coatless and wild-eyed, marched into the saloon by the very individual whom the moment before they had sworn to kill!

The boldness of the stranger unnerved these bold men, and they watched him with a look something like stupidity.

"I'm Truthful James, gents ov Magic," said the character, with a wave of a weaponless hand. "We've met before, I believe, but never hed an interdiction. I'm a peculiar cuss, I am. I heerd an inquiry about Powder Mack; hyer he is. He's crazy ez a loon, an' ort ter be taken care ov. Take hold ov him, Fury, er he'll fall!"

With the last words Truthful James urged his charge forward, and supporting and guiding him by the cords at his back, walked him directly up to Dan Fury, and there released him.

The wounded man had lost strength rapidly, and he was now so weak, Fury was obliged to hold him up or let him fall to the floor.

The roughs seemed to have lost both the power of speech and of action. The men who had sworn to shoot on sight never so much as drew a weapon from their belts in their consternation at such unprecedented daring. Truthful James acted as though he were among friends, with no thought of fear. He was as nonchalant as though he did not know that these men thirsted for his blood, but not for an instant did he remove his sunken, fascinating eyes from their faces.

He stepped backward toward the door, and as yet no word had been spoken save by himself.

"Don't put off doctorin' Mack," he suggested. "He's in a bad way, but it's own' ter his own foolishness. He hez been tearin' around like a mad grizzly. I hev no cards, gents," he went on, as though apologizing for a serious fault; "I'm a cur'us feller, ef I do say it myself, an' I left all my cards up ter Pepper-box, whar I come frum."

"I hev bullets, though! Be car'ful, boy!"

Caleb was in jeopardy. He had drawn a revolver from his belt, but, ere he could raise it, Truthful James had flashed a pair of six-shooters in view, and one of them covered his head.

The pards of Magic were themselves now, and ready to execute their oath, but no man among them dared to attempt to fire. Such an act would be an out and out forfeit of his life, with those threatening barrels leveled upon him.

Fury was practically powerless, with the weight of Powder Mack to support.

Behind his glistening men-killers Truthful James backed to the door, and smiled serenely, mockingly, as he bowed himself out into the darkness!

CHAPTER VIII.

BUD BRIGHT ENTERTAINS.

"I GUESS Caleb will learn to leave torpedoes alone one of these days," Bud Bright smiled grimly, as he sat at the table in his cabin, thinking of the meeting between himself and the young sport from Kansas City, a half-hour before. "He ought to know by this time that I'm not to be trifled with. But the drubbing won't do him much good—he'll attempt to get revenge at the first opportunity. It may yet be Caleb's life or mine."

His lips closed firmly and his brilliant eyes flashed.

"I have no one to answer to," he went on, drumming softly on the rude stand—"no father, no mother, no wife or sweetheart. There is no law here; every man carries his life in his own hands. If I don't defend myself no one will fight for me, and I did not buy my weapons for playthings. So look out, Caleb. I am ready, for you, my old enemy, be your game to the death!"

He stared abstractedly at the wall in silence for awhile, and then continued:

"Dan Fury and Cool Caleb are pards—that is plain. I see now how Fury came to know my real name—Caleb wrote it to him. Ah, the two are boldly playing for the richest prize in the Colorado Mountains!"

Before him on the table where the light of the tallow dip fell fully upon it, was a piece of ragged manila paper, which, unfolded, was about six inches square.

It was an uninteresting, unimportant looking document, but it was worth much to the boy—and to his enemies.

It was nothing more nor less than a chart to a wonderful mine.

The writing, which was coarse but plain, seemed to have been done with a sharpened stick, berry juice having been used for ink. The writer was Thornton Webb, and his manuscript was dated over two years before.

Besides the chart which gave directions to and described a certain spot, there were these addenda:

"This rich deposit was discovered by my partner, James Dayton, and myself, three months ago. Dayton has been gone a week. He was undoubtedly murdered by the Indians.

"Our large sack of gold I leave buried at the foot of a great oak tree, ten steps west of the X-marked boulder near the mine."

Bud Bright knew the contents of the paper by heart, and yet he read it with manifest interest.

"Who would not search for such a bonanza? It may make me as wealthy as a duke. I've been here a week now, and my researches have so far been unsuccessful. But I will find it; I believe I am within a half-dozen miles of it, and I believe it is somewhere east of here. I will find it in spite of you, Fury and Cool Caleb!"

There was a step outside the cabin and a knock on the door.

The youth instantly blew out his light, and hurriedly concealed the paper, *not* in the table drawer, but under his cot in a corner; then, with his hand on a weapon, he opened the door, and recognized his caller at once.

"Truthful James, at yer service!" said the lank individual, who had cowed the most notorious desperadoes in Colorado.

"Is this ther honer'ble Bud Bright?"

"I am that individual!" replied the youth, relaxing his hold on the handle of the revolver. "Come in."

He relighted the candle, and Truthful James entered, closed the door, and helped himself to a seat.

Bright turned to his visitor a questioning face. The silent interrogation was answered at once.

"Powder Mack, a ruffian I wounded at the Parlor, an hour or so ago, to save my own life, went crazy an' raised Old Ned in Denton's cabin, durn his unique pictur! He shot old man Denton, an' Dora ran ter me fer help, an' I took the devil back to his friends. But, Denton wuz gone, don't know whar, an' I promised ther leetle gal ter find 'im. Ye're the right stripe, ain't ye, Bud?"

"Correct!" was the prompt response.

"Waal, will ye jine Sierra Steve an' me in findin' ther old man! Ye see, its my opinion he's rid off somewhar a-hossback, fer there's a hoss-a-missin'."

"Who's Sierra Steve?—Dan Fury's agent?" queried the youth, suspiciously.

Truthful James's only answer was a long study of Bud Bright's face. At last he asked, very slowly:

"Who are you?"

The youth smiled and shrugged his graceful shoulders.

"Bud Bright," he returned.

"I know—but, what wuz yer handle afore ye become so bright?" persisted the man from Pepper-box, evidently very much interested. "See hyer," he went on, "I'm a cur'us cuss, but I'm an honest man."

Bright believed him, and said as much, adding:

"I know no harm ia telling my name. My enemies know it; and my friends may, I'm sure. It is Willis Webb, and I'm from Kansas City."

Truthful James rose to his feet. There was a strange look in his eyes, which he evidently tried to repress, but the youth noticed it.

"Jest shake hands, will ye?" the man said.

"Jest shake hands."

"You know me?" Bud Bright queried, in surprise, grasping the extended hand. "Maybe you'll tell me *your* right name."

"Don't ask nary questions. I never saw ye outside o' this cabin," was the reply.

This was a puzzling experience for the young bonanza-hunter, but he did not press his question, and the mysterious visitor returned to the subject of Sierra Steve. His communication on this was another surprise to the youth.

"Sierra Steve is Dan Fury's agent, yes, but he's mine, too!"

"And you are Fury's enemy?"

"Sartain. Thar, you know a great secret, boy—one that no one knows but us three. I kin trust you, an' we are friends. What do yer say?"

There was something indefinable about the man that made Bud Bright answer "yes" with his whole heart.

"Of course," he continued, "I'll help you find Denton. I have seen him, to know him, and also Dora. I should not be *human* to refuse her aid."

"So say I, me boy!" said Truthful James. "She's a flower from an angel mother's grave."

Bright was not slow to catch the hidden meaning of the last sentence, and the poetry of it struck him as remarkable, coming from such a character.

A question was on his tongue, but James interrupted.

"The mother died when Dora wuz born. That's all. Cool Caleb is also frum Kansas City; do ye know 'im?"

The youth leaned his chair back against the table and smiled.

"He was here about a half-hour ago, and I gave him two beautiful black eyes with my fists."

"I saw he wuz in a bad way when I took Powder Mack inter No. 2. What wuzther diffculty 'twixt you two?"

Bright ignored the question.

"Did you expose yourself again to Fury and his friends?" he inquired, in astonishment.

It was the visitor's turn to laugh.

"I delivered ther crazy critter ter Fury in person, in ther presence ov ther whole gang. An' I give Fury some advice about how ter treat ther patient. I'm a pecooliar cuss, I am, ef I do say it myself."

"Blamed if you ain't!" cried Bud Bright. "I should have said it was as much as your life was worth to show yourself to Fury after the trouble at the Parlor."

"Did yer see that?"

"Yes."

"Mebbe ye're ther friend in ther dark that saved my life."

The youth offered no denial.

"Bless yer sweet life, boy, what made ye do it?"

"I thought an enemy of Dan Fury's must be a good man," was the reply.

Truthful James was very grateful for the service, and he commended his young friend highly for his skill with the revolver.

"We'll go over ter Denton's cabin at once now," he concluded, "an' see ef ther old man hez turned up. Ef he hain't, you an' me'll git our bosses an' hunt 'im on ther trails, while Sierra Steve will spread himself over ther camp. He's in no danger ov a bullet, ye know."

The light was extinguished and the two left the cabin, making their way toward the northern part of the town.

Their conversation continued, and Bright told his new friend of his long-standing trouble with Cool Caleb.

Finally Truthful James said, abruptly:

"Willis, I wish ye'd tell me what ye are doing hyer. I might be able ter help ye a mite!"

The youth hesitated a moment. "I'm here on secret business," he returned at last. "But, I'll

tell you this much, Truthful: I'm hunting a lost bonanza."

The intelligence called no expression from the man save:

"Did it ever occur ter ye that somebody hed found it afore ye?"

"It never did."

The man from Pepper-box placed a hand on his friend's arm and whispered something in his ear.

The youth started and gave an exclamation.

"Truthful James," he began, "I want to know who you are—"

"Thet you'll learn after a bit, but not now. Many strange things will come ter light in Magic City soon, an' ther least of 'em 'll be *who I am*."

Bud Bright saw the uselessness of further pressing the question, and he pondered a moment.

"If what you suggest is so, why should Dan Fury try to steal my chart?"

"Chart? Waal, ter keep you from makin' trouble."

Again there was a period of silence.

"The location is right, but the description don't fit," remarked Bud.

"Years an' hands kin make changes."

"I'll kill two birds with one stone!" exclaimed the young bonanza-hunter. "When I ride in search of Denton I'll ride eastward!"

"Good!" returned Truthful. "Hyer we are. Yer eyes are goin' ter hev a treat!"

He knocked on the door of Denton's cabin, and, a minute later, the two stood in the light before the charming Dora.

The girl clutched something bright in the folds of her dress, and she laughed a trifle nervously as her visitors accepted her cordial invitation to enter, and she put aside one of Powder Mack's revolvers.

"You see, I took your advice, and was ready to defend myself," she explained.

"This is Bud Bright, Dora," said Truthful James. "A good friend he'll make you."

The young persons seemed mutually pleased to acknowledge the introduction.

"I have seen you before, and father told me your name," added the girl, smiling.

"And I heard of Denton's Daughter at the time I heard of Magic City," Bud Bright returned. "How often since it would be impossible to count."

Truthful James glanced about.

"Denton has not got back?"

"No," replied Dora.

CHAPTER IX.

AT BREAK O' DAY.

THE morning sun was taking its first peep at Magic City when Truthful James drew up his jaded horse before Sierra Steve's cabin and Sierra Steve himself.

"Well?" interrogated the rider.

"Still no Denton," replied Steve. "I'm satisfied he's not in camp. You failed ter find him—"

"Or any trace ov 'im. Ther boy hezn't returned?"

"No."

Truthful dismounted.

"Ther boss must hev a rest," said he. "He's been all over ther western kentry. An' say, Steve."

"Well?"

"Did yer tell Fury about ther Magic, so that ye kin stay hyer ter-day?"

"Yes. He swore like a sailor, an' then said thar'd be no use o' my goin' out ter-day. He'd ride out himself this mornin' and take a look at it."

"Said that, did be? Goin' this mornin'? Do yer know, I'd like ter hev a little talk with Dan, an' while you git breakfast, Steve, I'll trot over ter his cabin. He'll be leavin' purty quick."

Sierra assented, and took charge of the animal, while the man from Pepper-box took his way southward, toward the center of the camp.

The camp was not awake yet, though the time was short until it would be fully astir.

The boldness of this odd individual was remarkable. He must have known that his life was sought by the very men whose doors he passed, and yet he walked along with as much unconcern as though he were king of Magic City, and all its inhabitants his subjects.

"Fury is startin' early!" he muttered suddenly, as he noticed a horse standing in front of his foe's cabin. Then he added: "I wonder ef him an' Bud Bright won't run tergether on ther east trail."

James approached the shanty from the rear, for the reason that it faced south. As he

neared the structure he stepped softly, for it was not his purpose to give the enemy warning of his presence.

"I may breakfast with Fury, who knows?" he chuckled. "Though not by invitation, I guess."

He was alongside the west wall of the cabin when the door at the front opened, and he heard voices of men in conversation. He recognized them—Fury and Cool Caleb. He drew back against the logs and listened.

"I've got a bad eye and a bad hand," Fury was saying, madly, "but, I'll play a game that'll paralyze my foes! Curse ther storm that should do me damage! But, I'll be back in two hours, Caleb, and afore ther sun sets we'll plant both ov ther pesky galoots!"

The Tempest of Magic City approached his horse and prepared to mount.

"I've got two black eyes," Cool Caleb returned, in a rueful tone. "How do they look, Dan, this morning? Am I presentable enough to call on the fair one?"

Fury gave him a scrutinizing glance.

"Thar's no swellin' ter speak ov, and they're not very black. Ther camphor done yer a good turn."

Fury put his left foot in the stirrup, withdrew it, and took a step toward Caleb.

"Yer told a good lie about them eyes last night," he suggested.

Caleb, leaning against the casement of the door, flushed, and then gave a hard laugh.

"Thanks," said he. "How did you know it was a lie?"

"I ain't a fool," responded Fury. "Thar's a reason fer everything. What reason would them two hev in *beating* yer? I saw ther lie, Caleb, an' helped yer out in it, jest fer appearances afore ther boys. Then I've waited fer ther truth, but yer hain't give it."

He waited expectantly for an explanation.

"Well, the tale I put up in defense of my black eyes *was* a lie," Caleb admitted. "I had a meeting with Willis, and, curse him, he got the best of me. I had my revolver at his head, while he lighted a dip so as to find thet paper, and he threw the burning match into my eyes and rattled me. Then he jumped on me like a tiger."

Fury ran his fingers through his grassy beard.

"Did you ever hear of torpedoes?" he inquired.

His answer was a fierce oath, and:

"Never mind! The battle only gives me an excuse ter *kill* that imp of Satan!"

"Don't be in a rush, Caleb," Fury warned. "I'm goin' ter investigate ther damage at ther mine now. When I come back we kin resume ther game. You kin pass ther time mindin' Powder Mack."

"I won't have to mind him long."

"Why? Do you think he's goin'?"

"He'll be dead before you get back, in my opinion."

Fury gnashed his teeth.

"Curse thet skeleton in skins!" he grated, thrashing his muscular legs with the bridle-rein. "I sw'ar never ter close eye in sleep ag'in till thet critter is done fer! By Satan! he shell learn what 'blood fer blood' means! He will be shot on sight, ez the boys made oath last night. He bulldozed us once, but fer ther last time."

The man who heard himself thus reviled and threatened folded his arms and remained perfectly quiet. But there was an angry, dangerous fire in his eyes.

Fury seemed again on the point of mounting, but he turned and addressed Caleb once more. A thoughtful, half-fearful look had displaced the one of rage.

"I knew a sick man on ther Wildcat trail way up in the mountains once," he said. "You know who I mean, Caleb."

The youth nodded.

"Truthful James hez ther face ov thet man, only it's thin and sallow."

"You don't say—"

"No! I would sw'ar thet man died as I would sw'ar thet I live! Thar wuz a thousand chances ter one ag'in' his livin', Caleb. And yet, his face half-unerves me."

"Mebbe this is a brother—"

"On ther track?"

"Yes."

"Caleb, thar waz no witnesses on ther Wildcat road."

A short pause followed, broken by the youth:

"Fury," he said, slowly, "I saw a man who looked like Truthful James once."

"Where?"

"In Kansas City."

Fury's lips did not move, but his eyes said "go on."

"He's the man I suspicioned was on my trail in the real estate affair."

Fury was instantly excited.

"By Heaven! then he's not thrown. Are you sure, Caleb?"

"I believe so—yes, I am, though I never thought of it before. The minute I laid eyes on him I thought I had seen him somewhere, sometime."

"Thar's mystery hyer, boy. How long since yer saw him?"

"The first time was nearly a year and a half ago, only two or three months after we made the fifty thousand haul. He helped me to my room when I was pretty drunk, and accepted my invitation to stay all night with me. Then I saw him a time or two afterwards. He tried to ask me about you once, where you were, and so forth, and I got suspicious and left him. He wasn't dressed as he is now, but in common clothing and he wore a beard."

Fury heard this with a strange expression on his face. And Caleb, as he talked, gave evidence of a feeling of uneasiness.

Magic City's desperado stood straight and silent for a time, and then swung himself into the saddle ere he offered a reply.

"Thar's but one man like Truthful James in ther world," he said, "so thar ain't many chances fer a mistake. And yet, a jedge would say he never saw civilization. Claims ter come from Pepper-box, don't he? Good-by, Caleb. I've got food fer a good deal o' thinkin'."

Caleb offered no reply, and Fury spurred away toward the east, while the man about whom clung so much mystery retraced his steps toward Sierra Steve's abode.

It was quite evident that this strange character's fantastical appearance was only a blind to subserve the development of some great purpose.

"Only a little while," came intensely through his thin lips, "and all will be at an end. I've heard enough for this morning, and Fury may go. Our conversation can be postponed, and Denton must be found before I undertake anything else."

All at once the door of a shanty he was passing was flung open and a man sprung into the street, at the same instant firing his revolver and yelling like a Comanche warrior.

Truthful reeled forward as though hard hit by the assassin's bullet, then his own weapon leaped from his belt and he returned the shot with such deadly aim that his assailant threw up his hands and fell backward across the threshold of his cabin.

"They really mean to shoot on sight, the cowardly skunks!" James exclaimed, as he bounded away at full speed.

The effect of the yells and shots in the vicinity was electrical. Cabin doors were thrown open, and men in scanty garb almost fell into the street, with cocked six-shooters in their hands.

They were only in time to see their sworn enemy rapidly disappearing among the cabins to the north, already too far away for a decent shot, and they uttered savage oaths of rage and disappointment.

They followed him, later, but with no success. Meanwhile, Dan Fury rode on and on, leaving mile after mile behind him.

He took no note of the wild and picturesque scenery along the way. His brow was knit and he was plunged in deep thought.

Finally he arrived at a spot where the trail branched to the left. Here he met a rider, at sight of whom he drew his horse to a halt.

"Denton, by Tophet!" he ejaculated.

CHAPTER X.

A GAME FOR A GIRL.

DENTON had come from the north and was riding along at an easy gait, with his eyes bent abstractedly on the ground.

His handkerchief had been tied about his head, and there were traces of dried blood on his face and neck.

"He hez borred Powder Mack's hoss," Dan Fury muttered, as he recognized the jaded animal Denton was riding. "Hullo!" he saluted.

Denton started and looked up. He had not before seen Fury.

"Good-morning!" he returned, drawing up his horse. "If it isn't Fury! I must be getting near Magic City!"

"Wal, she's not a great ways off," the rough replied. "Keep yer back ter the sun frum this on an' ye'll git thar in an hour. Whar ye been?"

The old man chuckled dryly.

"Strangest journey ever I hed," he said, reflectively. "Been up to Pepper-box. Don't know when I started or how I got there. I just seemed to wake and find myself there. Some man was holdin' my horse and askin' me what I wanted when I woke up."

"Reckon he knew ez much about it ez you did, didn't he?" laughed Fury.

"Well, I had a mission?" answered Denton, soberly. "For all I got there in such an odd manner I had business. I arrived at the partial solution of a matter that has been weighing on my mind."

"What is that?"

"Why," answered the old man, and then he stopped; presently he began again. "Why," he repeated, "there's an individual in Magic City, or there was one, who excited my curiosity when he came to my cabin. Mebbe you've seen 'im—dressed in skin?"

"He said he came from Pepper-box, and I got to thinking I'd make a trip to that tough nest and find out, and if it was so, learn something about him. So when I woke and found myself there I jest proceeded business."

"What did ye find out?" queried Fury, and he could not conceal his eagerness. But, Denton did not appear to notice it.

"Not a thing, cap'n," he responded. "Seems he told a crooked story, fer I was told no such man was ever in Pepper-box. I half suspected as much."

"Why?"

The old man glanced up at Fury, and left the question unanswered. Though his mind was unsettled he had discretion enough to reserve some things to himself.

"I left Pepper-box hours ago," he said, "and I've been riding ever since. I let the horse take his own course. How I ever found the way in the first place is a mystery. I knew the general direction to Pepper-box, but had never been there."

The facts of Denton's strange ride may be readily understood. His mind affected by the wound made by Powder Mack's bullet, he had, as Truthful James thought, mounted the crazy desperado's horse and ridden off. The desire to learn about the mysterious man in skins, which, as he said, had been weighing on his mind, took possession of him, and with that strange judgment and cunning peculiar to the insane—the old man was temporarily insane—he had ridden a score of miles over a rough, unknown trail to the "unique" Pepper-box.

Arriving there, he came to himself, or partially, at least, and went on with his business. Finding that the man who had so interested him had deceived him, so far as his former abode was concerned, he had immediately set out on the return, riding without pause until his meeting with Fury.

That his brain was not as yet altogether level, as intimated above, was proved by his next few words, which showed, at the same time, that he was gradually coming to himself.

"Fury," said he, "whose horse is this? And where did I get him?"

"Burned ef I know whar ye got him," replied the desperado, "but I calc'late it's Powder Mack's four-legged railroad."

At the mention of Powder Mack, a new thought seemed to dawn on Denton's mind, a recollection of the crazy rough's assault, and his face paled.

He put his hand to his wounded head to make sure his memory was not at fault.

"Powder Mack gave me a bullet there—I remember now," he uttered; "burst open my door and shot me. Great Heaven! when I rode from Magic I must have left Dora unprotected—in Powder Mack's power! My God, Fury! I must ride to her like the wind! I had not thought of these things before!"

He gathered up the reins and urged his steed forward, but, as he came even with Fury, the latter caught the bridle-lit.

"Yer darter's all right," he took it upon himself to inform the old man. "She's all right, Denton. Ye kin rest easy. An' since ye mentioned her, I'm reminded ov a little matter I've somewhat considered, an' I'll jest lay it afore ye. Let yer hoss rest a bit longer while I tell ye."

Denton seemed reluctant to obey, for he did not place any great reliance in Fury's statement that his daughter was entirely unharmed and secure, but there was as much command as request in the rough's tones, and he concluded it would be best to heed him.

Fury came at once to the subject in hand.

"Thar's a young stranger in Magic," he began, "who us fellers call Cool Caleb. I've

known this young man fer a long time, an' he's a good 'un—indeed he is, Denton; a feller ye don't meet ever' day. Bright an' merry, an' han'some, an' he's loaded with dust. He's in love with Dora, an' I thought I'd ask ye fer him, ez he's a special friend o' mine, an' a little bashful sometimes. What do ye say ter the match?"

Denton was speechless for a moment.

"No!" he finally declared, with all the strength of his lungs. "She don't wan't to marry any Cool Caleb, and she sha'n't!"

"Air ye sure?"

"Sure! While I'm alive I'm sure!"

Fury's single eye suddenly began to blaze, and standing erect in his stirrups he gestured wildly, uttering the exclamation:

"Thar's a way ter make ye consent!"

"I don't believe it!" the old man returned.

Magic City's desperado leaned forward and hissed:

"You kin give yer darter ter Cool Caleb, er by Satan! I'll ride ter Leadville an' telegraph ter Chief Speers—tell 'im thet *Dayton, ther thief, is in Magic City!* I'll do it, old man!"

At this Denton's face grew snowy, and he almost reeled from his horse. He was incapable of reply, and Fury went on:

"I know some things, I guess. I hain't lived entirely in vain. How would twenty-five years behind the bars strike ye?"

Denton slowly recovered, and his muscles twitched with nervous excitement as he replied:

"You can do what you say, but I swear you shall never get my consent to take my daughter from me! She is more precious to me than the blood of my heart!"

Filled with passion, the rough lost control of himself at these words and the tempest again raged unchecked.

With his sound hand he pulled a revolver from his belt and thrust it into the old man's face.

"You may find it *death* ter refuse!" he cried. "Cool Caleb hez come ter Magic fer ther gal, an' hev her he shall! Promise me hyer an' now, Denton, in fear ov a speedy death, thet Caleb kin be yer son! One word—yes—is all I want, and ef ye don't give it I'll scatter yer brains on ther trail! Ef Chief Speers can't scare yer, I can! This is no play, fer if ye refuse, these rocks will be yer grave ther next minite! What do you say, Denton?"

An unexpected voice answered the desperado, uttering a command clear and ringing:

"Drop thet revolver, Fury, or I fire!"

Fury turned to look at his foe, and with a fierce oath, he dropped his weapon, for, fifty feet away stood Bud Bright, with a leveled six-shooter.

Denton noted only that he was saved, and then started his horse at full speed toward Magic City, toward his imperiled daughter, leaving his young friend and his mad foe face to face on the rock-walled trail.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERY OF A MINE.

BUD BRIGHT walked toward Fury with his finger on the trigger.

"I have some business with you," he said.

"Throw down your other shooter!"

The Tempest threw his second weapon to the ground, and was careful of his movements, for he knew by the boy's resolute face he would get a bullet at the first sign of an attempt to turn the tables.

"Well, Willis!" he demanded with strange calmness, after his storm, "what kin I do fer you?"

The youth came up to within ten feet of him, lowering his weapon, but still holding it cocked and ready for use at an instant's warning.

"I'm sorry to interrupt the murder of an old man," he observed sarcastically, "and I hope you'll forgive me, Dan. You see, I've found the lost bonanza!"

Fury's face became a study at this statement.

"What lost bonanza?" he managed to inquire.

Bright smiled sweetly.

"Another innocent abroad," he suggested. "You know well enough, Fury—the one to which the paper you tried to steal from me guided me. I've found it—it is the *Magic Mine*!"

"That's my property!" Fury blustered.

"You lie, and you know it!" returned the young gold-hunter. "I can prove by the paper I brought from Kansas City that the mine belongs to me! You know that I can, and that is the reason you want the paper so badly. I have triumphed in spite of you and Cool Caleb!"

Ere Fury could reply, he resumed:

"The late storm did me a good turn, for it

washed away what you were pleased to call the 'Ghost Cabin'—though no ghost was ever seen around there—and left exposed the nicely-concealed boulder with its 'X' mark—which I mainly depended upon to guide me to the treasure. Oh, you are a sly one, Fury! I would have made my discovery a week ago, but for the fact that that little cabin so completely disguised the presence of that big rock. You are just on your way out to look after the damage, eh? Never mind, Dan! You're too late. I'll look after the matter myself!"

"You've made a mistake," Fury began, fingering his whiskers nervously; "I diskivered an' named ther Magic—"

"Named it, but my father, Thornton Webb, and his partner, discovered it," corrected the youth. "The partner was killed by the Indians, and as my father's legal heir I now claim the property. I came here for it, I have found it, and I am going to have it, Fury! You have tried to balk me, but I warn you against crossing my path again! The mine has yielded you handsomely, and what you have you can keep, but you must relinquish your claims to the rich deposit which remains, absolutely and at once!"

"You might have some diffikelty in proving all ye say," said the desperado.

"The very fact that you knew nothing of a great sack of gold buried at the foot of an oak tree, ten steps from the boulder, is enough in itself to establish a good deal, ain't it?" exclaimed Bright, with dancing eyes.

Fury looked blank for a moment.

Then he gathered himself together, and his single optic flashed with triumph, as he cried:

"I kin prove I am ther lost pardner, James Dayton!"

It was the boy's turn to look amazed. The statement came to him with the force of a blow, and his firm young face grew white.

Fury, it seemed, had held his declaration in reserve, that it might have a more startling effect. He watched Bright narrowly.

"You can do nothing of the kind," the boy finally asserted.

"Did ye ever see yer father's partner?"

Bright admitted he never had, as the partnership was formed after his father came to the West in search of gold.

Fury's face at this assumed a look of confidence which it had not shown before.

"Then how do ye know I ain't him?" he demanded.

"You said you could prove you are Dayton. Do it."

"You will hev ter come with me ter my cabin."

"Walk into a trap, eh?"

"No; I kin show you, fair an' squar', thet my real name is James Dayton. If any gold wuz buried, it wuz after I left, so I knew nothing about it."

"I know how fair and square you are, Fury," said the youth. "Don't take me for a fool. So you're Dayton, my father's dear and honest friend?"

"I am that very feller, Willis."

"It seems, from what I've seen and heard of you, that you're not so good as you once was."

"Well, no. I hev kinder gone to ther bad."

"You didn't get killed by the Indians, then?"

"No, though I had a narrer escape."

"What caused you to leave my father and the new-found bonanza?"

"What caused me to leave?" repeated Fury, in some hesitation. "Why, I wuz goin' ter Leadville fer supplies."

"And when you came back my father was gone?"

"Yep. I thort mebbe he'd been killed."

Bud Bright could but believe that Fury's game was a piece of chicanery, and yet there were features about it that were decidedly puzzling. How, if the desperado was not the lost partner, had he known that his name was James Dayton?

How had Cool Caleb, Fury's boy pard, known that the chart to the mine was traced on brown wrapping paper? And there were other points that the youth could not reconcile to his satisfaction.

He found himself growing uneasy. Was he to be baffled in his hour of triumph? Should he have to share the bonanza with a man who was his foe, who had tried to rob him, who had allowed him to search futilely in the mountains for days and had done his best in every way to throw him from the track of his rightful possession?

"You've got to prove—prove all you say, Fury!" the boy cried, desperately. "And your oath will not be taken as evidence!"

"All ye've got ter do is ter come ter my cabin in Magic. I've got ther proof thar," Fury replied. "I don't carry it in my pocket fer ther same reason you don't carry yours thar—it would wear cut. I kin show ver to yer satisfaction thet I'm really James Dayton, in a very little time, too."

Bright again relapsed into a thoughtful consideration of the affair for a moment, and then he broke the silence by saying:

"I'll go with you to your cabin, Fury, but you shall remain my prisoner, for I mean to take care of myself and shall give you no chance to get the advantage of me. If you call on any of your friends to drop me, I'll drop you as quick as a wink, and don't you forget it!"

He advanced and picked up the rough's weapons and placed them in his belt, the while Fury assuring him he need fear no trouble.

"Now I'll step back here a little way for my horse," said the boy. "If you leave while I'm gone, I've nothing to lose, but will gain a pair of six-shooters."

Going eastward about fifty yards he came upon his animal, concealed by some rocks and bushes, where he had left him while he stole forward to hear the trouble between Denton, the man he had been hunting, and Fury his foe.

"Truthful James said there would be some strange developments soon, and I'm ready to believe him," the young bonanza-hunter muttered, as he untied his horse. "But, I must confess there's some mystery about this present affair that I fail to fathom. I'll sift it to the bottom, though, before the day is done." As he swung himself into the saddle, he added: "Denton's found, and the fair daughter Dora will soon be happy once more. Denton—great Moses! I heard Fury call him Dayton the thief! What does all this mean? Dayton—Dayton—"

Slowly the boy rode back to Fury, mystified, it is safe to say, more than he had ever been before in his life.

Fury was awaiting him, and the two at once started toward Magic City, the boy alert to possible danger and the desperado quickly confident of coming triumph.

CHAPTER XII.

COOL CALEB CALLS.

IN Sierra Steve's rough log cabin Truthful James, the man of mystery, partook of his breakfast of coffee, bread and venison, as quietly as though he were in a palace of safety, and not in the midst of reckless mountaineers, who were eager for his life.

He had had a very narrow escape.

"Ther gophers hev no idea ov what become ov me," he said to his friend, with a short, dry chuckle, "and they'll never think ter suspicion Sierra Steve ov protectin' me."

"Did you have a talk with Fury?" Steve inquired.

"I played eavesdropper on him an' Cool Caleb," was the reply. "Ef thar had been ther least doubt in my mind that they're the men, it's gone now. What I heard wuz quite enough—more satisfactory, I judge, than if I hed talked with ther boss wolf myself. Ez soon ez Denton's found we'll bag ther game, Steve. Today, mebbe, an' then ther long trail will be at an end. Do ye know, they're gittin' scared; I remind Fury so much of a man he found on the Wildcat trail, and Cool Caleb says I was on his track in Kansas City. Wal—only a little while, Steve."

After the meal Truthful James prepared to again leave the cabin. Sierra Steve brought his horse to the door, equipped for a new journey.

"I can do nothing in Magic in daylight, ov course," said the man in skins, "but you, Steve, are a prime man fer a prime place. It's luck Fury didn't want yer ter go with him. It will be your duty ter-day ter keep guard ov Dora, an' ther best way ter do it, is ter go ter Fury's cabin an' stay with Cool Caleb. Ez an excuse fer yer visit ye kin ask about Powder Mack, Caleb will probably call on ther gal ter-day, an' ef he does, let 'im, an' don't show yer hand unless he tries ter harm her. But don't lose sight ov 'im. I'm goin' on ther track ov Fury toward the mine. Denton must be in thet direction, an' Bud Bright may git in trouble with Fury, so thet's my route. Don't show yer hand unless it's absolutely necessary, Steve. It might spoil a nice game, an' yer usefulness."

Steve announced that he fully understood the instructions, and would carry them out the best he could, and Truthful James mounted and rode away, avoiding the central portion of the town where were the men who carried bullets for him.

Cool Caleb, after the temporary excitement occasioned by the firing at Truthful James, returned to the side of his patient, Powder Mack, who lay on the cot unconscious and evidently near death's door.

"Dan said to watch you, but there's not much use," the boy muttered, as he disposed himself in a chair and looked down into the face of the wounded desperado. "You're too weak to have another tantrum, and it's my opinion you'll leave here feet foremost before the sun goes down. Well, no one will weep much, I guess—the death will only serve to seal a man's doom. I wonder if Truthful James is really on my track? The more I think of him, the more I am ready to swear he is the one I thought was tracking me in Kansas City."

"As Fury said," he continued in his meditation, "there is a mystery about the case. One thing is certain—I shall not remain on the defensive. I came to Magic City for business, and it's going to be transacted. I sha'n't put off my visit to girl and mine any longer, and if I'm interfered with I'll show the deadliest pair of claws Magic City ever felt."

Caleb never lost confidence in his ability to win every game in which he took a hand. Defeats—for example, the one received at the hands of Bud Bright—did not long disconcert him.

The young villain's crafty eyes gleamed as he thought of his chances for success in the great game he was at present playing.

"I guess the cool gentleman who made a fifty-thousand-dollar real estate deal under the very nose of the law, can attend to an old man and a girl and a mine in lawless Colorado," he went on, "eh, Powder Mack?"

He drew a little hand mirror from his pocket and took a view of his face.

"A bad pair of eyes, but I can't wait any longer to see the girl I have come so far to wed. I think I'll make a call in the course of an hour, when the sun gets a little higher."

Shortly after, Sierra Steve entered the cabin, and introduced himself.

"Oh, you're Fury's mine boss," said Caleb, recognizing the name. "I'm Cool Caleb, from Kansas City."

"I've heard of you," responded Steve. "Fury's gone out to ther mine, has he?"

"Yes; he left me here to nurse Powder Mack?"

"How is ther pard? I came over ter inquire about 'im, ez I heerd the stranger who calls himself Truthful James had shot him. He looks mighty bad, Caleb."

"He is bad. I think he is done fer."

Sierra Steve and the youth continued their conversation until the sun was well up in the heavens, and became quite friendly.

Caleb at last concluded that a proper time had come for him to call on Denton's Daughter, and he brushed his hair and clothing, and improved his appearance still further by tying a gaudy neck-tie about the wide collar of his shirt.

He acquainted Sierra Steve with his intentions, and requested the miner to remain at the side of Powder Mack until his return.

"Your visit comes in pat," he smiled, "you can be useful as well as ornamental. You have no duty at the mine to-day, and nothing would please Fury more than for you to watch his pard here. What do you say?"

"Ov course," responded Sierra Steve, heartily. "But ain't yer afeerd ther men ov Magic will git jealous ov yer attentions ter ther little beauty?"

"Let them!" laughed Caleb, derisively. "It will do 'em no good. I've heard of the foolish law against loving the girl. What are girls fer?"

"Go in an' win 'er, I say!" was Steve's recommendation, and Caleb agreed to follow it if he could. "And I guess I can," he added, confidently, as he went out the door.

He had previously located the home of Denton and his daughter, and after a visit to No. 2, where he treated himself to "something bracing," he made his way straight to the abode of interest.

"The old man may not like me," he said, under his breath, as he approached the door, "but he'll have to stand me. I'm going to be affable, at first, and then, if I don't succeed—well, I haven't forgotten the old fable: If there's no virtue in turf I'll try stones."

He gave a rap on the casement, and a moment later the entrance was opened, and Dora, the flower of Magic, was before him.

He saluted her and entered, and with characteristic nerve helped himself to a seat.

"She's ten times more beautiful than Fury

pictured her!" was the first thought that leaped into his mind. He said aloud, in the most flattering tones:

"You are the famous charmer of Magic City, I believe?"

The girl flushed slightly, but she quietly replied:

"I am Denton's daughter."

"I have come all the way from Kansas City to see you," said he, staring at her in bold admiration. "I feel already doubly repaid. My name is Caleb Dexter."

"Are you the young man I have heard referred to as Cool Caleb?"

"Yea, verily," answered Caleb, assuming at once that the question was a token of favorable interest in him. But when she frowned he saw he was mistaken in this idea.

Dora remembered Truthful James's warning, and with the visitor before her she was not slow in resolving to follow the advice and have nothing to do with him. For all his conceit Caleb could see that he had made an unfavorable impression on the object of his adoration, and that his presence was not welcome.

Nevertheless he was quite at his ease.

"Is Denton here?" he inquired casually.

"No," said the girl, "he is"—she checked herself, the thought entering her mind that for her own safety it might be well to leave the bold stranger in the dark as to her father's whereabouts.

She had said enough, however, to bring a grin to Caleb's face and inspired an inaudible exclamation, "good!" He regarded the old man's absence as a piece of good fortune. Sierra Steve, it is needless to say, had conveyed to him no information on this point. The youth could proceed in his love-making without fear of interruption now.

"Dora," he said, familiarly, "as I told you, I have come a long way to see you, and I have called this morning to make friends with you. I hope we shall get along famously."

"Do you?" she replied shortly, with rising color.

"Don't you think we will?"

There was no response.

"By Jove! you're a queen of beauty!" he broke out, after a moment's waiting for her answer, during which he continued to gaze into her face. "You are a charmer! I know we shall be good friends."

Cool Caleb showed very little tact in his "love-making." He had for too long cultivated the acquaintance of inferior women to know how to approach a girl of this character. A nature like his could not understand hers.

She had not seated herself, but as he had entered had stepped back, until her dress touched the wall opposite the door, where she leaned and in displeasure regarded him.

He arose and placed his chair a little nearer her.

"I'm sure you like me," he smiled insinuatingly.

"No, I do not!" was the sharp return. "Will you leave me, Cool Caleb? You are not welcome here!"

"Leave you!" cried the young rough, "why, no! I want to get acquainted with you. That's what I come for!"

"Well, you know me, now go!" she uttered, drawing herself up majestically in her wrath. "Obey or a better acquaintance may prove unpleasant for you!"

"Of course I won't go," he said, easily.

"Come, my dear—"

"There! No more of that. Won't go?" Her right arm made a quick upward movement. "Go, or I will fire!"

The insulter of unprotected girlhood fell back hissing an oath. He found himself covered by a frowning revolver.

She stood erect with flushed cheeks and flaming eyes, with every nerve of her being in full play. She held the weapon with the steadiness and precision of an expert, and her tones were threatening and unmistakable.

Unknown to both, another weapon was at that moment held in readiness to defend the girl, should its service be required. Sierra Steve was a highly interested spectator of the thrilling scene.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE YOUNG SPORT'S TRIUMPH.

SIERRA STEVE had obeyed the instructions not to lose sight of Caleb. He had followed the boy and taken a position where he could observe the whole of the scene within, through a window.

"Thet girl is a prize!" he averred, admiringly. "She has blocked Caleb's little game with a royal rush! I guess I'm not needed hyer, so I'll

make tracks. Ther cool 'un'll be out in a minute, and he must find me back in ther cabin."

Satisfied that the girl was amply able to protect herself without his aid, and that the present action would quickly terminate the visit of Cool Caleb, he relinquished the handle of his revolver and rapidly returned to the side of Powder Mack.

But he did not know the desperate Caleb.

The young rascal was not to be baffled easily in his evil-hearted purpose, and though covered by a revolver, it was in the hands of a girl—one whom he might hope to hoodwink out of her victory.

She could not be pacified, he saw that; his only chance to accomplish her submission was by forceful strategy—by one of the many tricks at which he was an adept.

He would not obey the mandate to leave until the last hope was exhausted.

The tragic appearance the two presented would have brought forth a salvo of applause if witnessed on theatrical boards. It was the old story of the dove and the serpent, and for once it looked as though the agent of Perdition had been badly worsted.

But had Dora known what was to follow she would have pressed the trigger at once, for each moment of delay brought her one moment nearer Cool Caleb's triumph!

That the youth really had a cool brain, and that his title was not altogether misplaced, was shown by the prompt manner in which he formed his plans and set about carrying them out.

"You must take me for a ruffian," he said, in assumed indignation and perfect self-possession. "I am a gentleman, I assure you, and mean you but respect."

"Go, then," said Denton's daughter. "The greatest respect you can show me is to leave my presence and never return."

"If you are really in earnest, of course I will go," was the rejoinder. "But, Dora, I don't want to leave at the muzzle of a revolver. I want to leave you as a gentleman should leave a lady."

His words had the desired effect on the brave but inexperienced and unwary girl.

"If I lower the weapon will you go, and at once?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered quickly.

Down dropped the instrument of defense to her side.

No sooner had the movement been made than the foxy tough leaped toward her with the suddenness of a tiger's spring!

With a sharp scream she attempted to regain her lost advantage, but the hand that held the weapon was seized in a vise-like grasp and the weapon was wrenched away.

Then she felt both of her arms seized, and saw the hideously triumphant face of her foe close to her own.

She struggled furiously, and tried to scream again, but in her terror the sound died in her throat.

If Sierra Steve had remained to see this spectacle the chances are that Cool Caleb would have received a bullet in his brain; but the young mine boss, with his back to the scene, was wholly unconscious of it all.

The violent struggle did not last long; the over-powered victim felt her strength suddenly give way, and she fell back unconscious into her foe's arms.

Cool Caleb laughed in wicked glee.

"She's a regular little catamount, but she'll be as gentle as a kitten when she knows me better," he remarked to himself. "Now, we'll clear out o' here, before Daddy Denton comes back."

Taking up the inanimate form, he carried it to the door, and thence on toward the south.

"If any kiote in the camp don't like this he can get into trouble awful quick by interferin'," escaped his lips, as he hastily advanced with his beautiful burden.

He was not observed, or, at any rate, was not interfered with. All of the inhabitants of the place who were not at work in the mines were doubtless congregated within the walls of No. 2—with of course a few exceptions.

Presently the boy desperado reached his destination, the cabin which he had made his home since coming to Magic City.

He threw open the door and strode in whistling merrily. Sierra Steve, who was seated near Powder Mack, started up in genuine surprise.

"What's this, Cool Caleb?" he cried.

Caleb continued to whistle until he had deposited the girl in a sitting position in a corner.

Then he turned and with dancing eyes asked: "What's what?"

"What are you doin' with her?" Caleb explained.

"You've heard Denton came to Magic City from the East?" said he. "Well, Dora and me were old friends there, and I came all the way out here to make her my wife. She was awful glad to see me. You see, Denton ain't her father at all, and he keeps her prisoner here and treats her like a beast. She was so glad at my coming and the idea of escaping with me from Denton she fainted in my arms. So I just gathered her up an' brought her hyer. Wasn't that right, Steve?"

The mine boss could find no words to reply to this speech of the young disciple of Machiavelli.

"She'll come to herself all right in a little while," the boy continued. "Now, Steve, I'm going away again for awhile, and I want you to stay on hyer and guard her well. Don't let a soul know she's hyer, and don't let her go out of the cabin. You understand, Steve?—don't let her go out of the cabin."

"I understand, you bet," said Steve.

"Some one may come to see Powder Mack," Caleb remarked, crossing over to the big patient. "If so, tell 'em not to come in—he can't be disturbed—Judas! Powder Mack's dead!"

The "physician" placed his ear to the prostate man's heart.

"If he ain't," he added, rising, "he will be time he's got off to the graveyard. So it's all the same. Now we'll git him out o' hyer. Then there's sure to be no visitors, and the girl, when she wakes, will like the room better if there's no corpses layin' 'round."

He cogitated a moment, and then went back to the girl and carefully covered her with a blanket. He then placed a chair over her lower limbs in such a way that the blanket was held firmly in place.

"I'll go up to No. 2 and tell 'em of Mack's bad luck," he stated, "and let 'em come and carry him away. I'm dead sure the girl won't wake up fer a half-hour, and none of 'em 'll know she's hyer, 'specially as I'll sit on this chair and see that nobody moves the cover. How's the idea, Steve?"

"Good!" Steve assented.

A few moments later Caleb entered No. 2, and found the usual crowd of loafers.

"Powder Mack has shuffled over the dark divide, pard," he announced. "Come down to Fury's cabin and take charge of the body, will you?"

The pard's death was not unexpected, but the information had its effect. Even in the rough hearts of wild Colorado there is a love of man for his fellow.

Four men were delegated to accompany Cool Caleb and fetch the body to No. 2, where, it was suggested, "thar be some funeral exercise."

Arriving at the cabin, the party entered, and gathered about the dead man in silence.

In a moment Caleb withdrew, leaving them to act unassisted, and carelessly seated himself in the chair over the concealed captive.

Taking the blanket upon which Powder Mack lay by the four corners, the men lifted him from the floor and started from the room. Sierra Steve holding open the door.

At this moment the silence was broken by a muffled scream, and there began to be lively movements beneath Caleb's chair!

The men turned and looked, and in astonishment let their burden slip to the floor.

Caleb's face got very red, but he kept his seat. He choked back a curse that rose to his lips.

Dora had recovered her senses at a very inopportune time for the success of his plans. Finding herself very much in need of air she naturally began striving to free herself. She soon succeeded in getting the blanket from off her head, but the chair, bearing her enemy's weight, still held her body prisoner.

The men were not slow to recognize her, and they looked from her face to Cool Caleb's with much inquisitiveness and anger.

She uttered a cry for help, and oaths sprung from the bearded lips of the four pards.

An instant explanation was demanded, and they made a move toward the boy that was a manifest threat.

"Don't you know it's ag'in' ther law—"

"To Halifax with that!" cried Caleb. "I came all the way to Magic City for Denton's Daughter, and she's mine! Fury will back me in this!"

"Thet's not us!" the one in advance growled. "Ther gal is ther property ov ther camp, and it's ther rule no one man shall hev her. We can't hev no sech work ez this ef you are Fury's pard."

"Can't, eh?" flashed Caleb, with a fine display of wrath. "Can't? Mebbe—" he whipped out a brace of revolvers and covered the four—"mebbe you can! Think again!"

"This makes us foes, by thunder!" was the response to the action. "This means trouble fer you, boy. We swore last night ter hev vengeance fer them black eyes o' yourn—"

"There!" was the interruption. "I can get my vengeance, and you needn't concern yourselves. Are you going?"

The last words were a menace, and the mad pall-bearers again took up their dead, and went from the cabin.

As they made their way toward No. 2 their conversation was anything but complimentary to the cool sport from Kansas City.

"We'll fu'st put Mack under ther sod," they agreed, "an' ef Fury ain't back by thet time we'll throw his devil-pard out o' town! Ef he is back, he'll hev ter make this matter right, an' in a hurry, too!"

After the door had been closed on the four, Caleb an' Steve tied the hands of the fair prisoner and prevented her screaming by fastening a cloth over her mouth.

"I guess I know how ther case stands, pard," Steve volunteered. "Ther gal ain't so much in love with yer as you thought. But that's all right. I'm with yer, you bet."

Caleb was greatly pleased at this speech.

"Can I depend on you to keep the gophers out of here till I git back?" he asked.

"You kin that, even if I hev ter pull trigger on 'em."

"Good!" said the youth, heartily. "They won't be back, I think, fer a while, and I'll be hyer then. I've a little errand on hand that won't take long."

As he strode away from the shanty his mutterings explained his errand:

"Now I've got the girl, I'll look after the mine. While Denton's not at home I'll take a peep at the bonanza. I'll make a handsome nabob, I will!"

CHAPTER XIV.

DENTON TELLS HIS STORY.

DURING the time of the occurrences just narrated two men were engaged in an earnest conversation on the "East trail." They were Truthful James and Denton, who, as they came together, showed every sign of pleasure at meeting each other.

"Mornin', Denton," James greeted. "I'm glad ter see yer, ef I do say it myself! I hunted fer yer all night."

"Is that so?" said Denton. "I've had a remarkable journey. But have you just come from Magic City?"

"Yep; hev so."

"My daughter—is she safe, Truthful James?"

"Very well, thank you. She was enjoyin' peace an' health when I left thar. But whar hev you been?"

Denton, feeling sure now that Dora was unharmed, was no longer in a hurry. He made up his mind to settle a few points concerning the man before him, which had been disturbing his mind since their first meeting. He came to the point at once, without pausing to reply to the question about his journey.

"You lied when you said you came from Pepperbox!"

"Huh! Hev you been thar?" exclaimed the man in skins. "Wal, now! I'm a pecooliar cuss; sometimes lie like forty. Give us yer story."

The old man gave a short account of his strange trip, about as he had told it to Dan Fury, and concluded by saying:

"When you came to my cabin, Truthful James, I was impressed with the idea that I knew you, and the matter has weighed on my mind ever since. I want you to tell me right now who you are."

"A friend o' yours."

"So you said the other day."

"I might take a turn askin' you who you air. Yer name ain't Denton."

"How do you know that?"

"Ther how's too long a tale, but I know it."

The old man appeared disturbed.

"You are the second man who has said that to-day. Dan Fury in an attempt to blackmail me called my true name."

"Where'd you see Fury?"

"Back where the trail branches toward Pepperbox. The scoundrel wanted my darling Dora."

"Huh! Fer himself?"

"No—for his young pard, Cool Caleb. The one you warned my girl against."

"He's a unique critter, durn 'im—both ov 'em air, Denton," James declared. "And yer answer—"

"I told Fury my last breath would be a refusal."

"Thet wuz right. It worried 'im, I vum. Now, Denton, give me your story an' you shell hev mine."

Denton considered.

"As you know my name perhaps you know my story," he suggested, presently.

"I expect I do—some ov it—most ov it—maybe all ov it! But I don't know whether I do or not until I hear you tell it."

"You are a strange man," said Denton, looking straight into the other's face. "By Heaven! I could swear I know you! I am, at least, sure you are a friend to me. I'm enough judge of human nature for that. And since my enemy knows my story, I don't know why my friend—the only one I have in Colorado, perhaps—should not."

"Thet's sound reasonin'," said Truthful James. "S'posin' you turn an' ride back eastward with me. Thar's a trusty man guardin' yer daughter."

Denton demurred.

"I have my fears," he said, gravely. "Cool Caleb is in Magic City. I have never left my little girl so long before. She is in danger. Why go eastward?"

"I'm summit uneasy about my little friend, Bud Bright. Fury an' him—"

"Don't worry about that boy, Truthful James. When I saw him last he had the drop on Fury. The one-eyed fiend would have murdered me but for the interference of the boy."

"He's a bright 'un!" exclaimed James, enthusiastically. "He saved my life, too, from Fury. You left 'im on top, eh?"

"Yes. The minute he made the big knave drop his weapon I spurred away for Magic, and I don't know what followed."

"I guess he come out all right," said the "cur'us" individual. "Buddy knows how ter play a winnin' hand. Wal, ez he's all right, we won't go thet way."

"We'll ride toward camp," said Denton, and the other agreed. The horses were allowed to walk slowly, and after a few moments of painful thought, the old man began:

"I am intrusting you with a story I never told before, Truthful James. I shall tell you all, and I hope for full confidence from you in return. Two years ago I had a comfortable home in Kansas City, and was an influential man, being at the head of a large land syndicate. My wife had been dead for fifteen years, and I had no relations that I knew of save my fifteen-year old daughter and a brother. The latter's whereabouts had been for years unknown to me."

"The syndicate was prosperous, and it was found necessary to have an increase of capital of fifty thousand dollars. This money was to be paid over immediately for a very valuable tract of land lying near the city. The estate was worth twice the sum, but the man who offered it represented that he was forced to the sacrifice by the urgent need of a large amount of cash at once. He was a stranger, but we supposed everything all right, and jumped at his offer, finding that the title to the land was perfect.

"By appointment one afternoon the ten members of the syndicate met in my office and paid into my hands five thousand dollars each, which I was to give in exchange for the deed. The man with the deed did not come as he had promised, although he was waited on for two hours. By this time the banks were all closed, and the money was placed in my safe for the night. When I went down to my office the next morning it was gone."

"In great agitation I reported the loss to the police and the company—and then I found myself the object of suspicion. Who knew of the money in the safe, save the members of the company themselves? True, the safe had been blown open, but that was a trick to divert suspicion, it was said. The man who was to receive the money was on hand, and said that he had escaped his financial difficulty, and for this reason had not kept his appointment the day before, and he no longer cared to sell his property."

"Now, it so happened that on the night of the robbery myself and daughter had been in the company of a woman whom we had regarded as highly respectable, but who, I had learned from a friend on the way down-town in the morning, was of bad character, and had evil designs in winning the friendship and confidence of lovely Dora."

"Innocent though I was of the crime, I soon

resolved to flee, for circumstantial evidence was strong, and I feared that guilt would be fastened upon me. At my trial I knew the fact that I had been in the company of an adventuress, would be developed, and my daughter and self be doubly disgraced. It would be a terrible predicament.

"My God!" was my thought, "if the monster Sin is knocking at my door when I am home, what would he do were I absent—helpless behind bars?" I feared for my Dora. Without kindred—or friends, after our disgrace—she would be all alone in the world. I saw I must not be separated from her. I must remain free, even though under the stigma of crime, to care for her.

"And when the officers went to my home to accomplish my arrest, they found me and my daughter gone—whither they could not find out. Only one man—a most trusted friend—did I inform of my destination, and a short time after my escape he died, as I saw by a newspaper which he had subscribed for and had directed here to 'Denton.' But he told the secret to one other before he died, a detective, who undertook to find the real robber or robbers and clear my name. This man has written me short letters at intervals ever since, informing me that he was still on the track and hopeful of success. Why he has been so devoted to my interests, I haven't the remotest idea. I know nothing about him, not even his name, as his letters were always anonymous. He has been a great mystery to me, but I have somehow learned to have great confidence in him. However, I am uneasy about him just now, for I have not heard from him for several weeks.

"I have felt secure in Magic City, while knowing it is no place for my daughter. Day by day I have lived in hopes of hearing that the brand of thief had gone from me, and that I might return to my home. I took a claim in Magic when I first came that has proved a rich possession. It has a vein of gold that I mean to exhaust when my exile ends and I return to civilization. Never until to-day did I know a man in Colorado knew my real name was Cephas Dayton. I knew not what to think."

"Denton" had told his story without a break, and Truthful James had in silence absorbed every word.

When he had done the old man turned toward his companion with a look of eager inquisitiveness.

Truthful James kept him no longer in suspense regarding himself.

"I am the man," he said, "to whom your friend on his death-bed told your address. I am the detective who for twenty months has tried to clear your name."

He continued quickly:

"I am your brother, Cephas!"

Denton gazed at him steadfastly for a moment, and then he cried:

"I believe you! You are—you are!"

The two men clasped hands, and the tears sprung into their eyes.

"I see why your face has haunted me," said Denton, brokenly. "Yet how you have changed! Your face is thin and sallow, and why are you dressed in those outlandish skins?"

"The expression of my face I can't help, but my garb has been a disguise to aid me in my work in your behalf. That work, Cephas, thank God, will end to-day! Was it not a one-eyed man who offered the real estate to the syndicate?"

"Yes."

"Dan Fury has but one eye! Do you see the point, Cephas?"

The two rode together to Denton's cabin in Magic City, still in earnest conversation.

We will learn more fully of Truthful James later, if the reader please.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FALL OF THE FOE.

Not far behind the reunited brothers, as they entered the camp, followed Bud Bright, the torpedo bonanza-hunter, and his burly prisoner, Dan Fury.

The boy rode a trifle in the rear of his enemy, that he might the better keep a watchful eye upon him.

"Remember, Fury," warned the boy, "if you get me into trouble you have trouble, too. You'll have to spring your trap mighty suddenly to prevent my paying compliments to you."

Fury only laughed at the idea of playing any trick.

"I want ter really show yer that I'm yer

pardner," he assured. "Thar'll be no trouble, less you make it."

Fury's cabin was situated to the west of No. 2, and consequently the way led directly past the door of the resort. It so happened, however, that at the time the two passed the place was deserted, the crowd of Fury's friends being in the extreme southern limits of the camp, attending the burial of Powder Mack. So, to Bright's relief, they were unnoticed.

Reaching the cabin they dismounted, secured their horses to a post in the rear, and entered the door, where they were met by Sierra Steve.

"Hullo!" said Fury, who was in advance of his captor. "What ye doing hyer, Steve?"

"I'm guardin' Cool Caleb's captive," was the reply.

"Who?"

"Denton's Daughter."

The new-comers were quick to observe the presence of the girl, and great was the surprise of both. Fury had advanced to the middle of the room, and had his back to the others, and taking advantage of the situation, Sierra Steve touched Bright's arm, and gave him a look which the boy was not slow to interpret:

The double game of the mine-boss was not hard to understand.

"Thet Caleb is a rattler!" Fury muttered. "Whar is he now, Steve?"

"Dunno. He said he'd be back afore long."

Bright went forward and spoke to Dora, and was greeted with a look of joyful recognition.

She did not appear much alarmed at her position, for of course Steve had explained the situation to her, in the absence of Cool Caleb, and promised her protection. Still, as may be supposed, she did not feel altogether pleasant, with a cloth about her mouth, and her hands bound like a slave.

"Your father is found, Dora," said the boy, "and he is no doubt hunting for you at this minute. You shall be released, and I will take you to him."

Tears of joy sprung into her deep, dark eyes at the welcome intelligence.

"Sierra Steve," commanded the boy, "unbind her, and be quick about it."

"No," thundered Fury. "She belongs ter Cool Caleb!"

With his revolver in his right hand, and the muzzle pointed at Steve's breast, the young bonanza-hunter repeated the command, and it was instantly obeyed, Fury offering no further objection, although his wicked eye said that he was in full sympathy with Cool Caleb's plans.

"Wait a few moments, Dora," said Bright, when Steve's light task was completed. "I have a little business with Fury, and then I will go with you.

"Now, Fury, the proof."

The desperado produced a small tin box from a secret hole in the floor, and, unlocking it, took from among its contents a piece of brown manila, similar to that in the possession of the bonanza-hunter.

"Thar's the proof that I'm James Dayton!" he vociferated, holding it up.

"Read it," said Bright, quietly.

Fury obeyed, first exhibiting the chart, and then reading the accompanying directions, all of which the boy recognized as being exactly like his own. Evidently the two papers had been prepared at the same time. There were no postscripts to this one, however, the last sentence being:

"The mine of my partner, Thornton Webb, and myself, James Dayton."

"Now Bright could see how the idea had obtained that he had a brown manilla chart, and how Fury—

Was the big rough James Dayton, his father's bosom friend, who, it was thought, was killed by the Indians? The youth was sorely perplexed.

"I must see Truthful James," he thought. "He seems to know much about the Magic bonanza, and can perhaps clear up my mind."

Fury was regarding him in devilish exultation, but he ignored him.

"Come, Dora, we will go," he said, shortly, and the pair went out the door, the boy pausing only long enough to relieve himself of the rough's weapons and remark that he would see him again.

As they turned the corner of the cabin they came suddenly upon Cool Caleb.

For an instant the two youths exchanged hostile glances, and the girl drew back against the logs of the cabin, for she saw there was to be trouble, perhaps serious, for all at once Caleb jerked a revolver from his belt and raised it with catlike quickness.

But, although his movements were swift, Bright's were swifter.

Dora saw her friend's eyes flash like veritable brilliants, saw his right arm go up and then descend like light, and then Cool Caleb fall backward with stunning force to the ground!

But this did not end the scene.

Dan Fury suddenly sprung from the cabin and fired at the victor, and the shot took effect, turning the boy completely around and sending him reeling against the house!

Before the desperado could fire again he was pounced upon by Sierra Steve, and his weapon torn from his hand.

At this moment two others came upon the scene and made their presence known by sharp cries of surprise and anger.

They were Truthful James and Denton.

The former immediately cornered Dan Fury with a six-shooter, while the latter received his frightened daughter in his arms.

By this time Caleb was on his feet, but ere he could do any damage, Sierra Steve placed him at the mercy of his weapon.

"We'll march 'em into the cabin and tie 'em up," Truthful James asserted, and this they immediately proceeded to do. Within five minutes Fury and Caleb found themselves bound and helpless prisoners in their own abode.

Bud Bright was not seriously wounded; he had been but grazed and stunned by the rough's bullet, and he shortly came to himself. Dora fastened her handkerchief about his bleeding forehead, and was profuse in her sympathies.

"We got hyer jest in time fer the fun, eh, Denton?" observed Truthful James when the five friends were gathered in the cabin. "Ye see, Denton an' me wuz on ther bunt o' Dora when we saw Caleb comin' away frum ther Dora mine, an' we jest concluded ter foller 'im home an' see what we could see. Explain all this, Steve."

Steve explained the occurrences of the morning in detail.

The fact that four of Fury's minions had made trouble over Caleb's abduction of Dora interested the man in skins greatly.

He said little, however, and turned to Bud Bright, with a question as to his success.

"You were right when you whispered to me that the Magic was my lost bonanza," returned the youth. "I found the mine deserted this morning, and I soon knew that my search was at an end." He went on and told of the X-marked boulder, of the heavy bag of gold which had been cached ten steps from it, and which, after examining, he had secreted in a new place to await another coming, and closed his story by informing Truthful James that Dan Fury claimed to be James Dayton, who, in conjunction with his father, discovered the mine two years before.

"Can he prove that?" James asked, with a twinkle in his sunken eyes.

"He offers a chart in proof—"

"Huh! my boy, thet chart was stolen from me, for I'm James Dayton myself!"

Bud Bright was astounded. He stared at Truthful James for full a minute. Then his gaze fell upon Fury.

The one volcanic eye of the desperado was a mirror of the storm within him, but not a word left his tongue.

The momentary silence that followed. Truthful James's declaration was broken by the sound of heavy feet and coarse voices on the outside.

Sierra Steve, standing near the door, opened it and stepped out, closing it behind him. The conversation that followed was heard plainly by those within.

Steve faced ten men who made a demand to see Dan Fury.

"We see his hoss hyer, an' we know he's back," declared the spokesman of the party. "You know what ther trouble is, Steve. His pard hez violated ther law ov ther camp, and we want ther matter squar'ly settled."

"Fury can't see you now—" Steve began.

"Thunder he can't!" was the mad interruption. "Look hyer, Steve, thar's ter ov us hyer who claims ter hev some honor when a gal's concerned! We love Fury, but by ther eturnal catamounts! we love innocent maidenhood more! Rough critters we air, but we know what's right an' wrong!"

Steve did not know how to act under the circumstances, and his hesitation was fuel to the anger of the bronze mountaineers.

"By Tophet!" the leader exclaimed, warmly, "you belong with ther crowd ov yaller curs that slinked off ter No. 2 arter ther buryin', refusin' ter join us on this mission. Tell Fury ter come out, er we'll go in to 'im! An' ef he don't give us satisfaction we'll box Cool Caleb

town in a hurrah, ef we don't give 'im a steve ov hemp! What yer goin' ter do about it, Sierra Steve?"

Sierra Steve was prevented from answering by the opening of the door behind him and the appearance of Truthful James.

The man in skins was empty-handed, and he addressed the ten roughs as "friends."

"You are honorable and sensible men," he said. "I have made prisoners of both Fury and Caleb, an' if you'll come into the cabin I'll tell you why I did it. Come in, gents, and remember I'm placing confidence in your honor."

The invitation was accepted, and the roughs of Magic City crowded into the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXPLANATIONS.

In the enemy's home was enacted the last scene of our mountain drama.

In the presence of friends and enemies many explanations were given and received, until the facts of our story were plain to all.

The revelation of Truthful James—or more appropriately, James Dayton—ran about as follows.

Many years before he had separated from his brother in Kansas City and become a nomad of the West in search of gold. Finally he fell in with Thornton Webb, who was, like himself, in search of a fortune, and one day while the two were prospecting they found a wonderfully rich vein of gold, which they worked long enough to assure themselves was an unequalled treasure. It was about ten miles from where they had been camping, and where they had left most of their outfit. Realizing that they had, for sure, "struck it rich" at last, it became desirable to have their belongings, and also some fresh provisions, and so, armed each with a chart of the location of the find, which was situated in a wild and trackless region, Dayton started for Leadville, while Webb visited the old camp. On the way Dayton met with a body of Indians, from whom he escaped only after receiving a terrible wound. As he lay sick and nearly dying on "a wild-cat trail" in the mountains, he was found by a desperado with one eye, who robbed him of his horse, his gold, and his chart, and to complete his atrocious crime hurled him over a fearful precipice. But by a strange good fortune his body was caught in a growth of bushes, and he escaped death. He was able to crawl to the bottom of the rocky wall where he found water, and here he lived for many days, subsisting on nuts and a little game he brought down with his revolver.

He got stronger, and at last he dragged himself to Leadville, little more than a sallow skeleton. Terribly ill, he went on to Kansas City, to die in the presence of his brother, but when he reached there, Cephas was gone, and the newspapers were full of the great crime with which he was charged. He repaired to a hospital, where he recovered his strength but not his flesh. Then he set about the task of clearing his brother's name. He learned of the latter's whereabouts from a man on his death-bed. He found Cool Caleb drunk, and got enough information from him to know that he had been concerned in the robbery, and that he was one of two, the other being his father. He failed, however, to learn the whereabouts of the father, so Caleb was not apprehended, though Dayton had power to arrest him, for, on presenting his purpose to Chief Speers, he had received a detective's commission.

It might be well for the writer to here explain the real estate crime as it was eventually brought out in detail. It was planned by the cool and calculating brain of Caleb. For the purpose of getting a large sum of money in an office safe, his father, "Dan Fury," represented to the syndicate that he would sell a valuable tract of land cheap for cash, assuming the recorded name of the owner, who resided in a distant city, and appointed a late hour in the afternoon to deliver the papers and receive the money. Of course he had no papers, and did not mean to keep the appointment. The only object was to have Cephas Dayton wait with the money until too late to deposit it in a bank, and then leave it over night in his safe. The plan succeeded, and at the dead of night, father and son cracked the safe, having bribed the janitor to admit them to the building. This janitor James Dayton induced to confess shortly before we find the detective in Colorado.

While Dayton continued to work on the crime, he did not forget his mine. He sent a trusty man to look after it. The agent found that Magic City had sprung into existence, and that the mine, six miles away, had been confiscated by the man who had robbed Dayton of his chart—one whom it would be worse than useless

to ask to make restitution of the property. The agent also found "Denton" and his daughter. The detective brother instructed him to remain as their guard in the camp, and to also keep an eye on the mine. The agent was in the guise of a parson, and he did not make known his identity, even to "Denton," whose cabin he visited frequently. The miners were quick to become jealous of him, thinking him in love with Dora, and the "Gospel-sharp" was forced to leave town. However, he went back in due time, as Sierra Steve, and representing himself to Dan Fury as a mining expert, he was given the position of manager of the Magic Mine, in which he not only gave Fury satisfaction but was enabled to supply the detective constantly with funds.

Months passed, and James Dayton was unflagging in his quest for Caleb's father and partner in the crime. The youth led a fast life in Kansas City, and was kept under close surveillance. But at no time did he give way the whereabouts of the one so badly wanted. Of course the detective had no suspicion that the man who had robbed him and the one who had robbed his brother were identical.

Here allow me to digress slightly again, that the reader may understand as he proceeds all the connections in this curiously-wrought web of circumstances. Caleb had a purpose in remaining in Kansas City as long as he did. He was in constant communication with Fury, and was aware that the mine which had come into his possession was in part, or as James Dayton was dead(!), all, the property of Thornton Webb, whom he knew as the father of his enemy, Willis. This knowledge came from the names in the chart Fury had. Thornton Webb, after Dayton his partner left him at the mine, had made his visit to the old camp and returned, and had then fallen sick. Satisfied that his partner had been killed by the Indians, and fearing serious illness, he had buried the bulk of his gold and made his way to Leadville, whence he continued his journey home to his boy Willis. Here his disease, consumption, which was contracted while roughing it in the Western wilds, refused to leave him and Death fastened his teeth upon him. Cool Caleb's business was to watch him and notify Fury of any effort that should be made to regain the mine, which of course Webb supposed no man living knew of save himself and son. At last the consumptive passed away, and shortly after Willis, armed with the chart to the lost bonanza, started Westward to find it. Caleb, after notifying Fury, was then at liberty, and followed him, to assist in his defeat, and also to complete the wrecking of Denton's life by winning his daughter and his mine, which Fury had described to him as desirable property. Immediately on the heels of Caleb was Dayton the sleuth, who upon entering Colorado became Truthful James, the "peculiar cuss frum Pepper-box." All of Fury's movements are easily traced. Colorado and the West were blessed the day his evil course was brought to an end.

We have seen the triumph of Right, and our story is complete, with the addition of a few words more.

The men of Magic City, rough and desperate though they were, when they were given a thorough understanding of the remarkable case, relinquished all allegiance to Fury and his boy pard and bestowed their friendship upon Truthful James and his friends. Others were ambitious to take Fury's place as "king-pin of the camp," and then took the initiative in denouncing him. They dwelt especially upon the crime of abducting the beautiful idol, Dora, and their remarks had effect on many who were otherwise indifferent.

"You killed one of ther boys," Truthful James was told, "burned ther Parlor and wounded another in his own door, but by Tartarus! we fergit all that. Yer did what any one of us would 'a' done in your place. A man can't live in this kentry unless he does his share in makin' a graveyard a popular resort, much less run two pesky rascals ter earth."

The schemes of Fury, the Tempest, and Cool Caleb, the father and son so unlike in temper, had sadly miscarried, and they could but tamely submit to the inevitable. They were taken to Kansas City and turned over to Chief Thomas Speers, and in due time their trial came up before Judge White, who sentenced them to long terms in the Penitentiary at hard labor. The public welcomed the true story of the great Dayton robbery, and renewed respect and favor to Cephas Dayton, who was reinstated president of the land syndicate upon his return to his home.

Dayton and Webb fitted the Magic Mine with the best machinery, as did "Denton" the Dora Mine, and, under the masterful management of Sierra Steve, both "Strikes" proved veritable bonanzas.

"Truthful James" laid aside his grotesque dress of skins forever, and, after a few years of quiet life with his brother in the city, he partially regained his flesh and natural color.

Willis was troubled nevermore by his old enemy, Caleb, for which he was duly thankful.

He never ceased to congratulate himself on the success of his bonanza-hunt in Colorado, for he not only secured an independent fortune, but an even more priceless treasure, a loving and beloved wife as well.

In Kansas City Dora became his own until death do them part, and this is a fitting finale to my "o'er true" romance.

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